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ADVENTURES

OF

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BY

JAMES GRANT, Esq.,

Late 62nd Regiment.

AUTHOR OF "THE SCOTTISH CAVALIER" AND "ROMANCE OF WAR."

SECOND SERIES.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND CO., SOHO SQUARE.
1851.

PRINTED BY
COX (BROTHERS) AND WYMAN, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S-INN FIELDS.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FORLORN-HOPE.

At sunset the following notice was circulated:—

"*Brigade Orders.*—Officers desirous of leading the forlorn-hope are requested to send in their names, without delay, to Brigade-Major Gascoigne."

After turning over this invitation in my mind for some time, and weighing the chances of promotion against those of escape, I resolved not to send in my card to Gascoigne, notwithstanding that longing for fame and distinction—a secret craving to be the first man among the multitude, which, in fact, is the true sentiment that makes us buckle on the sword at first; but to lead a forlorn-hope is to throw away one's life.

Just when the troops were getting silently under arms in a sheltered place, near an old, gloomy, and empty convent, I went to the rallying-post. The spirited cavaliere di Castelermo earnestly requested the general to allow him the honour of heading the dangerous enterprise; but his services, his high courage and birth, and his commander's cross, availed him nothing in the present instance. Sir John politely thanked him, and hinted, as delicately as he could, that a British officer alone could lead where British soldiers were to follow.

"Signor Count," replied the Italian, bitterly, "there was a time when the cross of St. John was valued more highly—when its wearers *followed* none, but alone led the way. It has pleased Fate to try us sorely, like the Templars of other days: we have been deprived of our ships, our castles, and our possessions, of all but our name and glory; yet I trust there is a time to come when once more the banner of Malta will be what it was—what it has been ever since the accursed Mussulmans captured Rhodes, the shield of the Christian mariner, and the terror of the African barbarian!"

The restoration of his order to all its chivalric glory and military power, was one of Castelermo's darling themes, and one about which he bored me for many a long hour. Poor Marco! he was doomed never to behold the

realization of those gay visions of his bold and heroic fancy.

"Yet, signor," he continued, "if I cannot lead in the assault, I will endeavour to be the second man within the breach."

"Young Morley, of the 20th, has sent in his name," said Gascoigne, who at that moment approached, with a number of notes in his hand.

"The little fool!" muttered the general; "poor boy—he has seen little enough of life yet, to be in such a hurry to quit it. Does he lead the stormers?"

"No—Dundas, of ours," replied Gascoigne, who was a 62nd man. "So you mean to lead 'the lost children' to-night," he added to me.

"No, 'faith! a company is not got every day, and——"

"Your name is on my list as a volunteer, though!"

"The deuce it is!" I exclaimed, gravely; "I never sent it to you."

"Amazing!" said he, handing me a note, written in a hand and signed with a signature so like my own—having every blot, turn, and dash—that I was confounded and nonplussed.

"I never penned this note, gentlemen! Never! I pledge my honour; it is a forgery, to lead me into unnecessary danger."

"Singular!" said the brigade-major, puzzled.

"'Tis the roguery of Navarro," whispered Marco; "I will wager a hundred crowns to a carlino, this is a piece of his revenge."

"Dundas, there is no time for inquiry or exposure just now," said Colonel Oswald. "What do you propose—to withdraw your name?"

"No, I will lead the assault; and to-morrow, if I survive, shall expose this cowardly Sicilian forger, who is a disgrace to the uniform he wears," said I, exasperated to find myself compelled, in honour, to undertake this most perilous and deadly duty, where the chances of escape with life were as one to a hundred, without the glorious credit of being a willing volunteer.

"Fall in—the stormers," cried Gascoigne.

"Gentlemen—to your posts," cried Sir John, and I was left almost alone. The time of attack was so close at hand, that luckily I had little time for reflection, yet, for a few minutes, I became grave and melancholy enough.

Life, death, home, Bianca, wounds and agony, all floated in confusion before me; but these misgivings were stifled, and a chivalric recklessness—a desperate hope—a glow of courage that would make one face the devil, took possession of my breast, when the stormers, two hundred in number, selected from volunteers of the 20th, threw off their knapsacks, blankets, and canteens, and were handed over to me by their adjutant. For my heavy cocked-hat, with its long staff plumes, I substituted a light foraging-cap; for my tasselled hessians, a pair of large jack-boots. I buckled my waist-belt tighter, examined the blade and hilt of my sword, threw away my cigar, and gave the word—

"Attention! Mr. Morley you will inspect the rear-rank."

The pouches were opened, the flints and ammunition examined by the light of the diamond-like stars; the orders to fix bayonets, and load with ball-cartridge, followed. The ramrods went home on the charges with a sullen, muffled sound, the muskets rattled, and then the ranks became motionless and still. The bell of some distant campanile tolled the eleventh hour, and as the sound floated away, I could hear my own heart beating, through all its thickening pulses.

My subaltern, poor lad, looked very pale; I could perceive it by the starlight.

"Morley!" I whispered, in a tart tone of surprise.

"I am thinking of my mother—she is far away, at home," he faltered, and, colouring deeply, added, "I cannot help these thoughts."

"Few of us will hear twelve strike," thought I, whilst closing the ranks, and lowering the point of my sabre to the general, to intimate that we were ready.

"Success to you, Dundas," said he. "Move on by sections; you know the breach—at the top, the main street. The fellows begin to scent our purpose already. You will be ably supported; Oswald, with the 58th; Ross, with the 20th; De Watteville's corps is the reserve. Forward!"

We moved off, and at the same moment the French guns again opened on the town, worked with renewed energy and rapidity. The rock of Scylla was shaken to its sea-worn foundations, and the lights, flashing from battlement and embrasure, revealed the parapets lined

with stern faces and bristling bayonets, the lofty keep crowded with men, and its giant outline towering over the whirling smoke which issued from the guns of the lower works.

The windings of the shore, the peak of Monte Jaci, and the caverns below us, rang with continual discharges of the artillery, and the intervals were filled by the roar of the seething surf, and its booming in the yawning depths of Dragara, where—

> "Scylla bellows from her dire abodes!
> Tremendous pest! abhorred by men and gods!
> Hideous her voice, and with less terror roar
> The whelps of lions in the midnight hour."
>
> *Odyssey*, book xii.

The night was close and still; the frequent flashes of the fire-arms reddened the gathered clouds, and lightened the bosom of the ocean: the scene was grand and impressive. But we had very little poetry in our hearts as we stumbled up the rough, dark street, over which the thirty-twos and long nines whistled incessantly, one moment dealing death and mutilation amongst us, and the next bringing some ruined gable or ponderous balcony thundering down on our perilous line of march. With the utmost speed we pressed forward, while Oswald followed with his corps, and without much loss we passed the houses, and debouched upon the ridge, when the whole outline of the fortress burst at once upon our view. We rushed forward to the breach under a tremendous fire, which rained from every parapet, point, and loophole. Magnificent and terrible was the aspect of the castle at that moment; once more, innumerable blue lights shed their livid and sepulchral glare on town and fortress, land and sea, enabling the defenders to direct their fire steadily upon us. The musketry rolled in one voluminous blaze over breastwork and palisade, while the batteries played with incessant rapidity, loading the air with the sound of thunder, for the echoes, thrown back by the hills, were redoubled by the resounding caverns of the rock. From the summit of the keep to the lower walls, every point seemed to swarm with men, and was either blazing with light or shadowed by smoke, and bristling with lines of flashing steel.

Before us lay the breach, foredoomed to be the death-bed of many; it was an immense mass of loose stones,

and the ascent to it was most troublesome, with such obstacles as we had to contend with. Fascines and chevaux-de-frise were thrown across the gap, and in rear of this crowded the garrison, who were firing on us with deadly coolness and precision.

Morley fell dead at my feet! An indescribable sensation—a kind of frenzy, possessed me. I shouted and rushed up, brandishing my sabre, and holding aloft in my left hand the little standard, which I had undertaken to place on the walls of Scylla, or die in the attempt; it was blown to ribands by the storm of balls. Navarro was forgotten; I thought only of glory and Bianca!

"Forward, 20th! Remember Egmont! On, on! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried the wild stormers, as they scrambled up the breach in a mob, encumbered by the killed and wounded, who were falling every second under their feet. A shower of hand-grenades, thrown by the grenadiers of the 20th, who were posted in rear of a low wall close by, drove the enemy back from the chevaux-de-frise, and shattered it to pieces. These military engines, which are now most unaccountably laid aside, were followed by a few round shot from our battery; their discharge created great confusion among the French; so much so, that we reached the summit of the breach without suffering half the slaughter I had anticipated.

A new engine was now brought into operation, the effect of which will never be forgotten by me while life and memory remain.

"Push on, for God's sake! O, my brave fellows! trust now to the bayonet, and the bayonet only!" I cried.

"Viva Ferdinando nostro e la Santa Fede!" shouted Castelermo, springing to my side, but the Calabrian war-cry was almost lost in the cheers of the 20th, and the terrific din around us; the ear was stunned with one continual roar of frightful sounds. But the groan, the stifled gasp, the agonizing cry were unheard or unheeded; we made the corpses of our dearest comrades stepping-stones, and through the shot and shell-splinters, which swept around us like a hail-storm, we rushed on, to close, to grapple with, and overwhelm the enemy. At their head we perceived the marquis, a noble-looking fellow, on whose broad breast the stars and medals of his achieve-

ments were shining in the light from the muskets and bursting bombs.

At that instant I reached the summit of the breach, and laid my hand on the chevaux-de-frise, to vault over, when the earth heaved and yawned beneath our feet; a tremendous explosion and a dreadful crash ensued; a hundred of my party were blown to atoms in a moment, and I was thrown over the barrier, falling headlong in the midst of the enemy.

Unseen by us, after dusk, a *caisson des bombes*, or tub filled with loaded shells, had been secretly sunk under the stones of the breach, and being slightly covered over by fragments of masonry, lay concealed until the moment we trod upon it, when the French fired it by means of a saucisson, and produced a frightful catastrophe. There was a pause for a moment, but a moment only.

The few survivors of the storming party recoiled, and I saw Castelermo clinging with all the desperation of a dying man to a copestone of the shattered battlement. The stone yielded and gave way; there was a cry of "Basta!" and the poor knight vanished, but whether into the fosse or the sea beneath the cliffs, I knew not; in either case, I was sure he must have perished.

A yell of triumph burst from the French; it was echoed by one of defiance from our stormers, who once more rushed forward, led on by Colonel Oswald. His tall and stately figure afforded a prominent mark for the fire of the besieged; but he miraculously escaped. With all the courage that desperation could inspire, I used my sabre among the French, with a strength and energy they were unaccustomed to; but my efforts to clear the barrier and rejoin our stormers were perfectly ineffectual. At the very moment that Oswald sprang, sword in hand, over the now shattered blades of the chevaux-de-frise, followed by the 20th, thirsting for vengeance, I received a blow from the butt of a musket, and felt as if crushed beneath the weight of a mountain; the light of a thousand stars seemed to dance before me; then all was dark, horribly dark! My God! I faltered, and sank to the earth; the French, supposing me dead, trod over me as they rushed forward to the conflict.

The fatal breach was now passed, and our soldiers fought like lions, to retain their ground within it. The conflict was maintained, hand to hand, with resolute

valour; swords and ponderous musket-butts were whirling about like sticks at Donnybrook fair.

My head swam with the effects of the blow; yet I contrived to crawl from among the legs of the French—whose red breeches and leather leggings I shall not soon forget—and drew near Oswald. Then starting up, half-blinded with blood, smoke, and confusion, I rushed upon the French commandant. I had not exchanged half a dozen passes with him, ere a heavy dizziness came over me; I staggered backwards, and, sinking, clung to a cannon for support. He had raised his sabre aloft to cleave my head in two; but, like a gallant soldier as he was, he spared me, and engaged Oswald, in whom he found no common adversary; for the colonel was stout of heart and strong of hand as any kail-supper that ever came out of the famous "kingdom" of Fife.

Short but desperate was the combat that ensued; a stroke across the temple laid the famous marchese, whose name was so terrible to the Neapolitans, prostrate before his conqueror; and he was trodden to the earth among the gory corpses which cumbered the breach, while the whole 58th, with their black standards in front, swept over us.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A RENCONTRE!

As all our impetuous troops had now passed through the breach, the French were driven beyond it; but the conflict raged with undiminished fury in other parts of the fortress. The place where I had fallen, benumbed and bruised, was comparatively quiet and still, and whilst I lay there, I heard a voice close by me exclaim, in pure English, "O, my God! and here end all my hopes, my joys, and sorrows! My mother—my home—I shall never see them more! Alas! the one would weep for, the other scorn me! Aloise—dearest Aloise! we meet no more! Well, I have ever been faithful to you, and to our emperor. You have ever been loving, and my sovereign grateful."

Turning with surprise, I found it was the French commandant who was thus soliloquizing, whilst he bled profusely from a wound, which disfigured him very much.

"Here is a stout Briton who has been fighting under the tricolor, or some wild spirit that has fled from Ireland after the last rising," I thought, whilst approaching him on my hands and knees. I tied up his head with my handkerchief, to stanch the blood—though I myself needed the same attention—and on dividing the contents of my pocket-flask between us, the commandant recovered wonderfully.

"Sir, you have betrayed yourself to be British!" said I, in a low, stern voice. "With me your secret is safe; I respect you as a brave man, and should have done so still more had you been a Frenchman; but beware how you become known to Sir John Stuart; he is a stern soldier of the old school, who will assuredly order a drum-head court-martial, and have you shot as a traitor!"

The eyes of the marquis flashed fire.

"I am now a soldier of fortune," he replied, "free to serve where and whom I please. Stuart, if he knew all—if he remembered. But there is a secret spirit whispering at this moment within me, that I have met you before; you are the officer who led the forlorn-hope?" His voice faltered.

"Yes."

"And whom I encountered in the breach, before that tall officer cut me down?"

"The same."

"O, fate! if it should be so," he exclaimed, passing his hand across his blood-stained brow; and then grasping me with energy, "your name, sir?"

"Dundas," said I; "Claude Dundas."

"Of the 62nd foot?" His eyes were now starting in his head, so intensely he gazed on me.

"Yes, sir," I replied sharply, "*I* am not ashamed to acknowledge myself."

"Taunt me not—taunt me not!" he exclaimed, wildly; "God! I am your brother—I am Frank, who was dismissed from the Corsicans so unjustly. This hour—this agony—my wound—O say, in ten years, have you quite forgotten my features?"

For a moment I regarded, with wonder, his bronzed and bearded visage, now covered with blood; then, appalled by his words, I endeavoured to trace in his features those of the fair-haired and light-hearted boy who used to carry me on his back to school, and was my champion and pro-

tector in many a fisticuff battle and bicker, who was so often flogged by the grim old janitor for taking my faults and blunders on himself, and for whom I wept like a girl through many a long weary night, when, as a stripling ensign, he joined the army under the good duke of York, and first fired my boyish ardour by being gazetted for his valour at Valenciennes.

For a time, memory carried me back to the pleasant days of our childhood, and my heart, which a moment before had been strung for stirring deeds of carnage and death, relaxed and melted within me; in that terrible hour, in the gory breach of Scylla, surrounded by the dying and dead, with the uproar of the assault yet sounding above and around me, I threw away my sabre, and weeping, as I had done in my boyish days, embraced that brother over whom all believed the grave had closed, and whom I had never expected to meet again on earth.

"Happy as I am to meet you, Frank, I would rather that we had never met, than that I should meet you thus. The French uniform——"

"Is that of as brave an army as the sun shines on!" he replied, enthusiastically. "Insulted pride, necessity, and revenge, forced me into its ranks, where I have served faithfully and honourably, as the high civil and military rank I have attained, together with these badges, received some of them from Napoleon's hand on the Champ de Mars, and some on the battle-fields of Holland and Italy, can amply testify. Our mother," he added, in a broken voice, "tell me, our mother——"

"Lives still, but old and sorrowing."

"And Kranz—my evil genius?"

"Dead—shot at St. Eufemio."

"There ends our enmity," he replied, through his set teeth. "I have gained a rank infinitely above that from which he degraded me. Heaven knows how my heart bled when first I found myself opposed to the ranks of your army at Maida; the well-known colours and red-coats—ay, even my own old regiment, the gallant Rangers, whose officers and men, all save one, had been my comrades through many a perilous day. O, it was an hour of acute and indescribable agony when I saw them marching by the Amato in close column, with their band in front, playing the same merry quickstep to which I had often marched in happier days. I have found the French

as honourable as they are brave; and, could I have forgotten home, should have been supremely happy in their service. My marriage with Aloise Milette, daughter of the general of division—you must have heard of him—would have given me additional ties to France. Aloise—ah! if you knew her, Claude;" he paused, as if to collect his scattered thoughts, and then, although his senses were wandering, continued:—

"This last stronghold of the emperor in the Calabrias, I have defended to the last—yes, with all my power and courage; and in this moment of extremity I must not desert my brave fellows, while a chance remains of driving Oswald's brigade through the breach or into the sea. Farewell! God bless you, Claude! Speak kindly of me to those at home—to my poor mother—she will never see me more."

He strained me for a moment to his breast, and snatching up his notched sabre, staggered towards that part of the works where an unequal contest was maintained by a section of Frenchmen, whom our soldiers were endeavouring in vain to dislodge from a bomb-proof vault, by firing *in* through the same loopholes from which the enemy dealt death so securely.

"Vive l'Empéreur!" he exclaimed, rushing towards them with his brandished sabre.

"Frank!" I cried; "Frank, by the memory of all that has passed!—for the love of God—hear me!" But he heard me not. He had scarcely advanced a dozen paces, when a shot—whether aimed or fired at random, I know not—passed through his head, and flattened on a gun-breech beside me. He fell dead across a heap of his own men, and never moved again. A cry of horror rose to my lips, but expired upon them unuttered. Stupified with the events of the night, my brain whirled, and I sank down on the slippery and bloody pavement of the inner bastion; my mind was a fearful chaos, and I experienced a sensation like that of a horrible nightmare.

Weak as a child, and quite unmanned, bitter tears rolled over my cheeks. A dead man lay across me; I was half-stifled, but could not move. I thought of home; and the splashing of the waves far below me sounded like the murmur of my native Esk: again I heard, in imagination, the ripple of its waters tinkling in Roslin's lonely glen; the woods of Dalkeith rustled over me. Frank's last words yet rang in my ears, but it seemed the familiar voice of a

boy; then came that of my mother, low and sad—she was weeping for her son. Again, I was a child, and her kiss was on my cheek. Salt and hot were the tears I shed, and bitter the agony I endured, ere blessed unconsciousness possessed me, and sinking back against the gun-slide, I swooned among the bodies of the dead.

* * * * * * *

Long ere this, the place had been taken. Infuriated by the protracted assault, our men burst over the fortress like a torrent. De Watteville's soldiers were like madmen. Woe to the officer who dared to check their plundering, or curb their fury!—and woe to the unhappy women who fell into their power! Innumerable episodes of horror followed the conclusion of the storm. The French, who had been disarmed, were marched instantly to the beach, and embarked on board Sir Sidney's squadron; which had come close in shore on hearing the noise of the attack.

No time was to be lost in making Scylla again defensible; therefore, before daybreak, the dead were all interred in a common grave, in a hollow near Monte Jaci. For one amongst the hundreds thus buried, I desired a separate and more secluded sepulchre; but, stripped of his epaulettes and orders, *his* body, without being recognized, had been hurried away, and entombed with the common herd in that dreadful grave, over which two hundred soldiers hurled the earth, for concealment of the ghastly heaps within it. I remember the place: an orange-tree, of gigantic size, shadowed it; and a ruined Grecian column may yet point it out to the tourist; it was lying near, and our soldiers placed it over the grave.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

REGGIO.—AN IMPROVISATORE.

Whilst I was still lying where I had sunk down exhausted—stunned by my wound, appalled by the recent discovery, weak with pain and loss of blood, and utterly prostrated in spirit—the fortress became still, or comparatively so, and the objects all around were veiled in darkness: the blue lights had burned out, and the lurid gleam of the cannon and musketry no longer flashed through the gloom. Cries and piteous exclamations of

agony resounded from every quarter ; and the living were dragged from beneath heaps of dead, to be sent to the hospital—an old, half-ruined convent, which was appropriated to receive the wounded; but which was soon found to be inadequate to contain them.

Three soldiers employed in searching for those who needed relief approached me ; one of them bore a lantern, and its light glared on the once gay, but now tattered, uniform of Castelermo, who accompanied them, and whose fate I had altogether forgotten.

" Basta ! and here he is !" he exclaimed ; " only stunned, I hope.—How now, Signor Capitano ?—nothing more than a few inches of the skin ripped up ?"

" A cloven head, only," I replied, in a faint voice.

" Only !" he reiterated.

" An old wound broken out again. I was struck by a musket-butt on the very place where a ball grazed my head at Cefalu. But I am glad to see you alive and scatheless, after that sad tumble you had, when blown out of the breach."

" I have indeed had an escape which, to my dying day, will never be forgotten. I fell only into the fosse ; but a yard more, on one side, would have launched me into the deep ; and, by this time, I should have been—Madonna knows where, in the depths of ' devouring Scylla.' Never shall I forget the storming of this castle, though I should live as long as father Adam."

The soldiers raised me up, and, on receiving the assistance of Castelermo's arm, I was able to walk, and was led into the interior of the castle ; where, after guards had been posted, one party of the conquerors was making merry on the wine, brandy, and viands found in the French stores. Another party was already bearing away the dead, for interment ; they were so numerous, that the general deemed it prudent, in so hot a climate, to have the poor fellows all under the turf by sunrise. The taking of the place had been attended with considerable slaughter; but I have forgotten the exact casualties.

For several days after the assault, our troops were occupied in repairing the old defences, building new ones, remounting cannon, burying the stray corpses, which were sometimes found in retired nooks and corners, and in attending to the wounded ; whilst I remained inactive on the list of the convalescents. To me, these were days of

indescribable misery and *ennui;* I endured agony, both of mind and body; for a wound on the head, dangerous at all times, is doubly so in a warm climate. I became feverish and restless, and was haunted by gloomy visions and fancies.

The assault—its dangers, uproar, and excitement—that unexpected and terrible rencontre—the voice—the face—the words—the figure, which seemed to come to me from the grave, to appear only, and be lost for ever—all flitted continually before me, like some hideous dream. I brooded over the secret, which I dared not reveal even to my most intimate friends in the garrison; and it oppressed and weighed upon me like some vast incubus. I was restless, unhappy, and careless of all that was passing around me; or, if I spent a thought on the external world, it was always accompanied by a wish to be again engaged on some piece of active service.

Oswald being the officer who fairly led the stormers through the breach, I did not receive promotion; but, in lieu, a riband with a silver clasp, having the word *Scylla* inscribed on it, was presented to me. This I considered no ordinary compliment; rewards for merit being—strange to say—almost unknown in the British service; if we except those rings worn on the arms of the privates, and called "good-conduct stripes," in contradistinction to the *bad*, which are bestowed elsewhere.

My name was duly emblazoned in the general orders, and transmitted to the Horse Guards, whence the reiterated compliments of the commander-in-chief were published through all the journals of the day; and while, in my obscure billet at Scylla, I knew nothing about it, I was becoming quite a man of note at home.

As soon as the fall of the fortress became known, the inhabitants of the town, whom the din of war had driven to Reggio and Messina, came flocking back to their ruined and rifled habitations; and the picturesque little place soon resumed its wonted appearance of life and activity, which the presence of Oswald's brigade, and the vicinity of our fleet, not a little increased.

I had a tolerably comfortable billet with an ancient lady, who did all in her power to make me happy; for she perceived that something weighed heavily on my spirits, and that I was gloomy and melancholy. She was a garrulous old gossip, whose head was then as full of

saints and miracles as it had been of love and lovers thirty years before, and a famous maker of polenta and choke-priest, with which she often nearly choked me; but old Signoressa Pisa was so kind and motherly in her manner, that I have ever since remembered her with gratitude.

The little town and its castle were crowded to excess; the latter with Oswald's brigade, and the former with its returned inhabitants, our own wounded, and those of the enemy. There was not a closet, garret, or cellar unoccupied; and Castelermo shared with me the hospitality of Signora Pia. Our quarters could not be called billets, as each person housed himself where he could; the seniors generally occupying the best, by right of rank.

From the windows of my apartment, we had a noble view of the Straits, studded with vessels, and gleaming in blue and saffron by day, and in silver and green by night; the white-terraced houses and spires of Messina, the beautiful mountains, and all the Sicilian shore. In the evening, I often enjoyed the cool prospect and a fragrant cigar, while sipping the scanty half-pint of ration wine, to which the medical officer restricted me, and listening to the dashing of the waves on the cliffs below. The little library of the signora was placed at my disposal; but the "Gierusalemme," the "Hundred Ancient Tales," the poems of Alfieri, and the sayings and doings of many holy personages were all turned over listlessly; until, at last, I found one volume which interested me deeply. It was one of which I had heard Bianca speak most rapturously, and which all Italians mention with admiration —the Poems of Ossian, the Bard of Selma, which are so ably translated by the celebrated poet Cesarotti, whose pen has added an essay on their authenticity and beauty, which the Italians can appreciate, even through the medium of a second translation. From Napoleon—who is said never to have been without a copy of this work, especially when writing bulletins and general orders—the Abate Cesarotti received a handsome pension. The book afforded me occupation during the few weeks I remained at Scylla. I say weeks, because Ossian is not a work to be skimmed, but rather studied; every line is so replete with power and beauty. But my quiet mode of life was not fated to last long, as I was sent on duty the moment my name was off the staff-surgeon's list.

As soon as I could ride, I ordered out Cartouche, and,

accompanied by Castelermo, rode over to Reggio, in faint hope of beholding that famous phenomenon, the Fata Morgana — the sea fairy, as our padrona called her— who, according to the Calabrese tradition, is a mermaid dwelling in the Straits of Messina, above the waves of which she displays her palaces of shell and coral, to lure young men to destruction; but there are fairies in all the cities of Italy, whose lures are more dangerous than those of the poor mermaid in the fable.

Castelermo informed me that he had been hearing mass at a chapel of San Bartolommeo, among the hills, where he had solemnly returned thanks to the great patron of his order, for his narrow escape at Scylla.

"And San Bartolommeo, who was he?" I asked.

"A most blessed saint, signor. To-day is the anniversary of his martyrdom: he was flayed alive, by order of Astiages, the Armenian. But my escape—maladetto! 'twas a narrow one: when my hold relaxed, and I fell from the broken battlement, I thought myself gone for ever. Yes, signor, but for St. John of Malta, and the beatified Madonna, I must have been dashed to pieces on those stone flags, which received me so softly: in all my campaigns under the cardinal, in all my fighting under the winged horse at Rome, and the Maltese flag, I never encountered an adventure equal to it!"

"Under the Maltese flag? Against the Turks, I presume?"

"Basta! ay, and corsairs of Barbary, pirates of Greece, and, lastly, Frenchmen. You are aware, that three months after the soldiers of Napoleon captured that solitary rock, where the banner of the true faith had waved so long, the hereditary vassals of the order, irritated by the tyranny of his general, Vaubois, rose in arms: with a few knights of the old Italian langue, I hastened to put myself at their head, and assist in the expulsion of those irreligious invaders. Ha! then we had something like war. The gates of Valetta, and the other cities of the isle, were shut, and their blockaded garrison reduced to the utmost famine and distress. Then ensued that long and bloody siege, which lasted for two years, during which time more than twenty thousand soldiers perished by the sword or starvation. As the great master-spirit of those military operations, I was in my glory, and was full of fervour, rapture, and ecstasy, at the prospect of once more establishing my

order. No pilgrim, on first beholding the holy city from afar, ever experienced the glow of indescribable feeling which possessed me, when the fleet of Portugal, sent by Lord Nelson to our assistance, burst joyously on my gaze,—as the gallant ships, with their frowning tiers of artillery, their standards streaming, and white canvas swelling in the breeze, steered round the promontory, and opened their broadsides against the castle of St. Elmo. O, hour of joy! I kissed my sword, and raised my hands to the blue sky above me, in thankfulness. Lastly, came the fleets of Britain and Sicily, after which the fortresses surrendered, and the soldiers of Vaubois, marching to the sea-shore, threw down their arms. All the treasured hopes, the glowing thoughts of years, were about to be accomplished: I stepped forward, to receive the sword of the general; judge of my wrath, when Lord Nelson anticipated me; bowing low, Vaubois presented his sword by the hilt, and the admiral immediately handed it to a short, squat fellow, a sailor, who stood behind, and who, with the most provoking indifference and *sang froid*, put it under his arm, with those of other officers, as he received them in succession."

Castelermo heaved a deep sigh, paused, and then continued:—"I had in my hands the same consecrated standard which Ximenes, our most illustrious grand-master, had, in better days, unfurled against the infidels of Algeria; I was about to hoist it on the ramparts of Valetta, and at the point of the sword claim the isle in the name of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, when lo! the British flag was hoisted on the turrets of St. Elmo: a cold shivering seized my frame, while my heart glowed with honest indignation at the grasping nature of England. Slowly the flag ascended, unrolling its gaudy crosses to the breeze, when the cheers of the troops, mingling with those of our fickle and perfidious vassals, were echoed back by the shipping of the allies in our harbour, and the Sicilians thundered a salute from the bastions of Ricasoli. I thought of old Villiers de l'Isle Adam, of Diomedes, of John de Valette, and the glories that had passed away for ever. Sick at heart, and disgusted with the world, I tossed into the sea beneath me the banner of Ximenes, and, sheathing my sword, quitted for ever the isle of Malta, where for two long years I had fought, toiled, and bled, animated by the proud and chivalric hope, that, by

restoring to its pristine grandeur the order of St. John, I should live in story, like those brave warriors who shine in the glowing pages of Vertot. But, alas! we are falling now, as the Templars fell of old."

I never interrupted him: the departed glories of his order formed a sad but favourite theme, and he continued to dwell upon it until we arrived at Reggio. The white houses of the town, the undulating hills, palm-groves, and orangeries, formed a very agreeable landscape, sloping down to the glassy bosom of the dark-blue ocean.

"And this is Rhegium, so celebrated in the history of the past."

"Where guilty Circé trod the waves with feet unwetted, and where the wild warriors of Barbarossa gave all to fire and sword," said the cavaliere, as we rode over ground strewed with ruins, now rapidly becoming hidden under luxuriant masses of ivy and vine. "These shattered walls bear traces of the great earthquake of 1783, which will never be forgotten until some still greater calamity overwhelms all Calabria with destruction and horror."

"The Grecian columns yonder——"

"Are the relics of an earlier age—fragments of the great temple of Minerva. Reggio was once famous for its country villas; of those you behold only the ruins, which are used as a common quarry by the people; and here you will look in vain for the city, once so famed for its extent and opulence; but the sacking and burning of 1544, the convulsion of 1783, and succeeding wars and woes, have reduced it to what you now see."

Though some of its streets were new and handsome, they were quiet as those of a sequestered hamlet at home: impoverished and oppressed by the invaders, their inhabitants were few, and those poor and dejected in appearance. The scenery, however, was beautiful; the winding shores, the dark waters of the Straits, the high mountains of the purest green, and the variously-tinted groves of aromatic trees, all combined to render the place charming. The smooth bosom of the glassy sea vividly reflected the landscape; but we looked in vain for that wondrous phenomenon, the Fairy Morgana, who was so condescending, a few years before, as to display her coral palaces thrice to the Dominican, Frà Antonio Minaci. Less favoured by the fair mermaid, we beheld neither inverted fleets nor

submarine cities, and, after a canter along the Marina, adjourned to the Café Britannica to dine.

In the evening, as we sat sipping our wine at the open windows, enjoying the cool west wind from the Siraits, and observing the passers-by,—for the streets became a little more animated, as the men turned out to smoke their cigars and talk politics, the women to see them and promenade,—a crowd beneath the balcony attracted our attention.

"An improvisatore," said Castelermo, as the notes of a guitar were heard. "Shall I give him a theme?"

"Certainly: but what shall it be? The Fall of Rhodes?"

"You shall hear: the Capture of Scylla."

He drew a card from his case, wrote something on the back of it with a pencil, and threw it over the balcony. In the midst of the crowd stood a young man, in the common but graceful garb of the province, with a broad, scarlet riband encircling his hat, the front of which was adorned by a loyalist cockade of the same hue. His jacket of green plush was gaily embroidered, a broad white shirt-collar was folded over it, yellow cotton breeches, a green silk sash and leather gaiters finished his attire; but there was something very jaunty, intelligent, gay, and impudent, in his rosy face and *tout ensemble*. His mandolin announced him to be one of the improvisatori,—wandering minstrels, or itinerant storytellers.

I know not whether those men are worthy of the name of inspired poets; but, so wonderful is their talent for versification, that some of the better class of them have been known to produce, extempore, a five-act tragedy, and an epic, divided into cantos, and having a regular plot, characters, and dialogues,—all maintained in octave-syllabic rhyme. I had often encountered them in Sicily, where, by the wayside and among the mountains, their songs had cheered the tedium of many a long march, and had bestowed many a ducat upon them,—regarding the wanderers as representatives of the ancient troubadours or minnesingers, once so common over the whole of Europe; but the modern minstrel we encountered at Reggio provoked me extremely.

"Benissimo!" cried he, while coins of every description showered from all quarters into the high crown of his inverted hat. "The illustrious cavalier has given me a

gallant theme; Madonna aid me to do it justice! Signori, you will hear a story of the brave English captain, who took the castle of Scylla for King Ferdinand, and so gained the love of a fair Italian signora."

"Bravissimo!" cried the men, and the women clapped their hands, exultingly.

Castelermo glanced at me with a droll smile, and we both burst into a fit of laughter.

"Impossible! the fellow cannot mean me!" said I.

"You shall hear. Ah! the prelude—hear him—excellent! He excels Andrea Marone in verse; and our fair Corilla, the gifted peasant-girl of Pistoia, who, amid the roar of a hundred cannon, was crowned queen of the gentle art at Rome, could not finger the mandolin more lightly, or with better taste. Basta! he should make his fortune!"

Imagine my surprise, on hearing the improvisatore give forth, extempore, to his eager, silent, and gaping audience, a song or poem of some thirty or forty long verses, in very tolerable *ottiva rima*, descriptive of the siege and storm of Scylla, in which, under the name of Claudio Dundazo, I was continually mentioned in a strain of most extravagant compliment, as the *valoroso capitano*, and most gallant *cavaliere* in the world. What annoyed me most was, that the name of Bianca d'Alfieri had not escaped the minstrel, who made her the heroine of his impudent epic.

"Oh! Castelermo—by the Lord! this is too ridiculous. I care not about myself; but Bianca's name, to be used thus, for amusing the rabble of Reggio!" said I, starting up. "How the proud girl's cheek would flush, if she knew of this! You gave him the theme."

"The theme, merely.—Hush!" added the knight, detaining me, as the improvisatore concluded, describing our joyous marriage, in a splendid cathedral, with incense burning, bells ringing, and priests praying. After a grand invocation of all the saints,—to whom he described us as vowing several pounds of excellent wax-candle, whilst a magnificent petticoat was promised to Our Lady of Burello,—the bard concluded: once more he inverted his hat, into which we each threw our mite.

"His profession must be the best in Italy," said I, on beholding the shower of coins which rained into the

amply-brimmed receiver,—the clanking dollar, the ringing carlino, and the tinkling bajocch.

"He has acquitted himself well: Corilla, herself, could not have done better; and, believe me, I pay the wanderer no ordinary compliment in saying so."

"But he must be cautioned against using the name of the Signora d'Alfieri in future."

"Already he has gone, signor," replied the knight, "and your threats and requests he would neither hear nor obey. The improvisatori will find the celebration of the fall of Scylla the most popular theme in the Calabrias, where all rejoice that the horse of Naples once more spreads its wings over the last stronghold of Napoleon in the province. Did you not observe how his enthusiasm enabled him to acquit himself, and how he seemed to rejoice in his wondrous art? While describing the night attack on Scylla, his breast seemed to pant with ardour, and his eyes sparkled with animation; his swarthy cheek glowed crimson, while his rapid and liquid words enchained his listening audience. He is a handsome fellow: at that moment, he seemed beautiful, and all the women were in raptures with him. Yet how still they remained, as if a spell was upon them, until he concluded, and then burst forth the universal shout of 'Excellentissimo—oh! most excellent!'"

On our return to Scylla, as I dismounted, throwing the reins to my groom, he informed me that an Italian general officer was waiting for me at the house of Signora Pia, on some business of importance. Startled by this communication, I hurried to my billet, and found the supposed general to be old Zaccheo Andronicus, who, in his gorgeous chasseur's livery, might easily be mistaken for some officer by Mr. Bob Brown, whose perceptions of things, beyond the heel-post of the stable, were none of the clearest.

I joyously welcomed "the old grey Grecian," who had recovered from his wound, and was now bearer of a letter from Bianca, in answer to one despatched the night before Scylla was stormed. I consigned him, forthwith, to the care of my padrona, and hurried away to enjoy, in solitude, the delight of perusing Bianca's first—and, as it proved, her last—letter.

Written in her pretty little running hand, it began with the usual address of "*caro signor;*" but my heart leaped, on finding the fair girl using the frank and more endearing

phrase of "*anima mia.*" The viscontessa begged to be remembered to me: she had lost an enormous sum at faro last night, with the last of her suite of brilliants. Luigi was slowly recovering from the effects of his wound, but his peace of mind was gone for ever. To hasten his recovery, his mother had thrice vowed a solemn pilgrimage to the cave of St. Rosalia, in Sicily, but had as often abandoned the attempt, and vowed candles to San Ugo, instead; since which he had begun to recover more rapidly, and all at the villa had no doubt that the saint had interceded in his behalf. She applauded my conduct at Scylla; and, to me, her praise was more valuable, and more highly prized, than that of the generals. She had perused all the despatches in the *Gazetta Britannica*, and her heart had leaped alternately with pride and joy—with fear and horror—at the narration. "Oh! Claude," she continued, "you know not how proud I am of you—how I rejoice at your escape! But Francesca, my sister—my unhappy sister!—we can discover no trace of her—her fate is enveloped in mystery. We have every horror to fear; for Petronio, the bishop of Cosenza, though deemed a saint by the peasantry, is a bold and bad-hearted man, and, Francesca in his power!—oh! Madonna! Would that you could visit us; her loss and Luigi's illness fill us with perplexity and dismay."

Next day, I despatched an answer by the chasseur, promising to solicit the general for a few days' leave of absence, to visit the villa. But this idea was never realized in the manner I expected, as I was despatched, on urgent duty, to the Adriatic shore, a day or two afterwards.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NAVARRO.—REVENGE!

Although I had no doubt that this honourable personage, for the purpose of disgracing me or endangering my life, had, in that true national spirit of revenge of which every day brought forth some new example, forged the letter which Gascoigne received, still I had not sufficient proof of the fact, either to "call him out," or place him under arrest. We met daily in the garrison, and

glances of undisguised hostility from him were duly answered by those of contempt from me: but such a state of things, between men wearing swords, could not endure long.

A whisper of suspicion—most injurious to the honour of Navarro, as a man of courage and loyalty—was circulated through the brigade. Shunned, scorned, and placed *in Coventry*, by the officers, slighted, and regarded with curious eyes, by the soldiers, his baseness recoiled upon himself,—he led a life of solitary wretchedness and misery. But he was a traitor and Buonapartist at heart, and in close correspondence with Regnier, to whom he soon deserted, yet not before committing one of those atrocities which disgraced Italy then, as often as they do a certain western island now.

Having so many adventures to describe, and so much to relate, I must be brief. My quarrel with Navarro soon came to a crisis: being sent to him by the general, with a message relative to the re-fortifying of Scylla, I was so provoked by his dogged insolence, that I laid my riding-switch pretty severely across his back; a challenge ensued, and we were to fight next morning, in the most remote part of the fortress.

Cool and determined, though exasperated, I went to bed without the least anxiety: I had no doubt of coming off victorious; and, hardened as I was by the bloodshed of service, would have cared no more for shooting Navarro, than killing a partridge. *Now*, it appears to me singular with what deliberation Castelermo and I made our preparations over-night,—rolling six pistol cartridges, fixing the flints, oiling the springs, and putting all in order to start by daybreak. After supping as usual, we retired to bed, each giving the other solemn injunctions not to sleep too long.

I have already stated, that, in consequence of the crowded state of the billets, we both occupied the same room.

About daybreak, I started, and awoke; the business on hand rushed upon my memory. I sat up in bed, and reflected for a moment on the events another hour might bring forth: my train of thought was arrested by observing a current of air agitating the muslin curtains of my couch, and causing them to float about like banners. I leaped out, and, to my surprise perceived the casement

unbolted and open,—admitting, at once, the cold sea-breeze and dull grey morning light.

"Castelermo—signor, rouse! It wants but twenty minutes to the time, by my watch."

"And ten by mine," said Gascoigne, putting in his head: he was closely muffled up in his cloak. "What! only turning out; eh, Dundas?"

"It is all very well for you to be in a hurry," said I, pettishly. "You Irishmen take these affairs quite as matters of course. I'll be ready in a minute; a chill morning for a shooting-party," I added with a poor attempt at a laugh, "Where is Macnesia?"

"Below, with his instruments; but your friend, the knight, sleeps soundly. Hallo, Castelermo!"

There was still no reply. Dressing in haste, I called often, but received no answer; and, supposing that he must have risen, I drew back the curtain of his sleeping-place, to assure myself, when a scarcely articulate exclamation of horror escaped my lips. Imagine my grief and astonishment, to behold our poor friend lying drenched in his blood, pale and lifeless!

I placed my hand on his heart; it was cold and still. Gascoigne bent over the window, and shouted—

"Macnaisha—Macnaisha—you devil you, come here!" The doctor arrived in a moment, but the cavalier was beyond his skill; there was not the slightest warmth or pulsation. The gallant, the noble, and chivalric Castelermo had perished by the hand of a cowardly assassin. Buried to the very cross-guard, in his heart, a little ebony-hilted poniard was struck, with such force, that some strength had to be exerted to draw it forth; and, on my doing so, a strip of paper, attached to the pommel, attracted our attention; it contained these words:—

"Let those who would avenge this insolent *Briton*, seek me among the ranks of the French at Cassano; a word I might have forgiven—a blow, never.—*Pietro Navarro.*"

Although boiling with indignation, I shuddered at the fate I had so narrowly escaped. For *me* it was that the fatal stroke had been intended; and I then remembered Castelermo's warning, to beware of the cowardly Navarro. Clambering up by a garden-wall, the miscreant had reached our casement, which he had contrived to open noiselessly; but on entering the room he had mistaken the

unfortunate cavalier's bed for mine, and my friend had thus perished in my stead.

"The blow must have been struck about midnight," said Macnesia.

Only an hour after we retired to rest: perhaps Navarro had been outside the window during the greater part of the night, watching our preparations for the intended meeting next morning. But, with three hundred of our soldiers, we had all a narrower escape from this Italian's hatred and duplicity, of which the reader shall hear more anon.

The Signoressa Pia was overwhelmed with consternation and dismay on learning that the knight of Malta had perished under her roof. Followed by a mob of fishermen, the podestà, with his clerk, arrived and committed to writing a statement of the facts; while I preserved the poniard and the assassin's signature for production and evidence, should a day of retribution ever arrive.

Enraged at this act of sacrilege, the populace searched every nook and corner in the town; two or three old knights of Castelermo's order, who resided in the neighbourhood, armed and mounted their followers and servants, who, in conjunction with those of the podestà, and a detachment of our light troops, scoured the whole country round; yet without success. Navarro was nowhere to be found; but we soon after learned that he had sought refuge behind the lines of his friends, the French; who still remained intrenched at Cassano, awaiting the slow advance of Massena.

In the solitary mountain-chapel of San Bartolommeo, poor Castelermo was interred with military honours; the grenadiers of Sir Louis de Watteville, drawn up outside the edifice, fired three volleys over it, while the coffin was lowered down in front of the altar; where he now lies with his mantle, sword, and spurs, like a knight "of old Lisle Adam's days."

He was one of the last cavaliers of the original order, which for two hundred and sixty-eight years had possessed the isle of Malta. Since 1800, when France ceded the rock to Britain, they have been gradually declining in power, and disappearing; and, although at the petty courts of Italy a few aged men are sometimes seen with the eight-pointed cross of the order on their bosoms, the Knights of Rhodes and St. John of Jerusalem have, in

effect, passed away; like Castelermo himself, their glory is now with the things that were.

Unfortunately, I was not present to witness the celebration of my friend's obsequies. On the close of this day, which had commenced so inauspiciously, I had returned with the light infantry, and wearied by a long search among the woods and hills, was sitting dejectedly in my billet alone, when Pierce, the general's orderly, arrived with a message, that I was wanted by his master. I took up my sabre, and followed him to the antique mansion where I had first seen Sir John Stuart, on my arrival at Scylla.

The general was engaged in writing; the table was covered with despatches, returns, reports, and morning-states; a map of Italy and a pair of compasses lay close by. The rosy light of the setting sun streamed through the barred and latticed window on his stern Scottish features, his silver hairs, and faded uniform; and the tarnished aigulette and oak-leaves, a cross of the Bath, a medal for Maida, and clasps for other services, all blackened by powder-smoke and the effects of the weather, gave him a very service-born and soldier-like aspect.

"Pierce, hand Captain Dundas a chair, and wait outside."

"Help yourself, Claude," said he, pushing two decanters of Lacrima and Zante towards me, after asking a few hurried questions concerning our fruitless chase after the runaway engineer. "Fill your glass; the Zante is tolerable; and just excuse me for five minutes, will you?" He continued writing, and then folded a long and very official-like document. "A journey is before you," said he; "and as you will have to start to-morrow morning by daybreak, light marching order is best."

"For where, Sir John?"

"Crotona; I would not have sent you back there, but Lascelles of yours has not returned from Cassano, and Lieutenant-Colonel Moore is not available. Will you believe it? I have received orders from the ministry to abandon the Calabrias forthwith, or do that which is the same; to order back the expedition to Sicily, leaving garrisons in the strong places we have taken. These troops will, of course, become the prisoners of Massena; who (I am informed by a despatch from General Sherbrooke) has arrived at Cassano, and is there concentrating a force,

which will soon burst over both provinces like a torrent; so that Maida was won, the citadel of Crotona taken, and the castles of St. Amanthea, Monteleone, and Scylla, all gallantly stormed, for nothing. We might as well have remained in peace in our barracks at Palermo. But, however foolish and contrary to my own conviction, those orders must be obeyed. One of the Sicilian government gallies will take you hence to-morrow, and put you on board the *Amphion*, in the Adriatic. Give my compliments to Captain Hoste, with this order, to take on board Colonel Macleod's command from Crotona, and convey it straight to Messina. To Macleod you will convey these instructions; to deliver over the citadel, with its cannon and stores, to five hundred of the free Calabri, who will in future be its garrison, and be commanded by major the cavaliere del Castagno, or any other officer whom that insubordinate fellow the Visconte Santugo may appoint. A detachment of De Watteville's shall hold Monteleone; and Captain Piozzi, with a few of the Italian guards, the castle of St. Amanthea. I am resolved that as few British troops as possible shall be sacrificed by the folly of our friends in authority. Your regiment is the best in Sicily, and a wing, or detachment of it, will garrison Scylla, which is of the utmost importance to us as a key to Italy; but, if hard pressed by Massena, they can easily abandon it under the protection of our shipping.

"To-morrow I return to the camp, to embark the main body of our army for Messina; you will, of course, come round with Macleod's Highlanders, and rejoin me at Palermo, where I hope we shall spend many a merry evening in talking over our campaign among the Apennines."

I was in a sort of a maze while the general so good-naturedly explained his plans and orders, in which I felt very little satisfaction. My thoughts were at the villa. To leave Calabria at present, was, perhaps, to leave Bianca; a deadly blow to my air-built castles; unless Massena's legions marched south in time to change the intentions of our leader. Relying on the general's friendship, I had no doubt that my return to Sicily might be delayed for a time; therefore, I did not hesitate to solicit the appointment of commandant at Scylla, with the local rank of major in Italy.

"You are but a young officer, and the charge is a most

important one," said he, impressively: "but you are getting tired of me, Dundas?"

"Far from it, Sir John; the staff ——"

"I am afraid I task you too severely; well, as a punishment for your discontent, you shall have Scylla to keep, so long as our friend Massena will permit. His advance will soon scare the garrison out of it. I cannot refuse you that which you underwent so many toils and risks to attain; the nomination will appear shortly in general orders" (he made a memorandum); "but on *one* condition it is granted, that you do not spend too much of your time at St. Eufemio."

I coloured at the inuendo, while the old fellow laughed at what he considered a hit, and held the decanter of glowing Zante between him and the sunlight. He shook me heartily by the hand, and, buckling up the despatches in my sabretache, I hurried back to my billet to desire my servant to pack my valise, and have all in order for starting by daybreak.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CAVALLO MARINO.

THE report of the morning gun had scarcely pealed away from the ramparts, ere Brown appeared by my bedside, and the *réveil* rang through the echoing stillness of the castle above me. In barracks, there are few sensations more agreeable than that of being awakened by the *réveil* on the dawn of a summer's day; gradually its sweet low wail steals upon the waking senses, sadly and slowly at first, then increasing in strength and power, till the full body of music floats through the morning air, redoubled by the echoes of the empty barrack-courts, when, as the measure from the slowness of a Scottish lament increases to the rapidity of a reel, the drums roll impatiently, as if to rouse the tardy sleepers.

"Well, Bob, what kind of morning is it?" said I, scrambling up, shivering and yawning.

"Cold and raw, sir—the drums sound as if muffled, a sure sign of a damp morning. The galley's boat is at the castle stairs, sir."

It was chilly and dark daybreak; the ramparts of

Scylla looked black and wet; the sentinels, buttoned up in their dark great-coats, kept close within turret and box; a thick fog floated on the surface of the sea, and rolled in eddying volumes around the caverned rock and the hills of Milia. With Bob's assistance, I soon donned my tight leather breeches and jack-boots, and shaved hurriedly by candle-light, using the case of my watch, in lieu of a dressing-glass. It was a morning of that kind when it requires all one's resolution to leave a comfortable bed, and turn out in five minutes, to face a drizzly fog and cold sea-breeze; so, tightening my waist-belt, I threw my cloak round me, bade a hasty adieu to my kind padrona and her dishes of polenta, and sallied forth.

The boat awaited me at the sea staircase, a flight of steps hewn in the solid rock, and descending from the castle to the water, which was rolling in snowy foam on those at the bottom. I threw my portmanteau on board, and leaped after it. Brown saluted and bade me adieu, while I warned him, on peril of his head, to attend to Cartouche and see him duly fed and watered, as I used to do myself.

The boat was shoved off, and we shot away into the mist from the lofty rock of Scylla, which, with its castled summit, loomed like some tall giant through the flying vapour. The oars dipped and rose from the wave in measured time, while the boatmen chanted and sang of the glories of Massaniello, the fisherman of Amalfi, and of the mad friar, Campanello, who led the Calabrian revolters in 1590.

In the pauses of their chorus, I could hear the boom of the waves in the hollow caverns, sending forth sounds like the howling of dogs and the roaring of Scylla's ravening wolves, who abode among darkness and misery, and rendered the spot so terrible to the ancient mariner; but the noise died away as the distance increased. The fog arose from the face of the waters, the rising sun began to gild the summits of the Sicilian and Italian hills, and I beheld the war-galley lying, like a many-legged monster, on the bosom of the brightening deep. We steered alongside, the oars were laid in, and the side-ropes and ladder were lowered into the boat, which two sailors held steady, at stem and stern, by means of hooks. The galley was named the *Cavallo Marino*, and a gigantic sea-horse reared up at her prow; the same emblem appeared carved

upon her quarters, and the name was painted, in large red letters, on the broad white blade of every sweep. She was a high vessel, pulled by fifty oars, each of them at least forty feet long, and worked by five miserable slaves, half-naked; they were chained by the wrists to the oar, or else fastened to their seats, between which there ran, fore and aft, a long plank or gangway, where the boatswain or task-master walked about, applying his lash on the bare shoulders of those unhappy wretches who did not exert themselves sufficiently.

The sailors of the *Cavallo Marino*, about fifteen in number, were stationed forward; she was armed with a large thirty-two pound forecastle piece, and manned by two hundred and fifty slaves, the dregs of the prisons and dungeons of Naples and Sicily,—assassins, bandits, run-away priests, and villains of all descriptions, steeped in guilt of every imaginable kind. She had a captain, two lieutenants, and a few petty officers, who wore the government uniform; they were grouped on her lofty poop when I ascended on board. I was received, according to the custom of that service, by a cheer from the slaves; but, alas! such a cheer! It was more like a yell from the regions of darkness; for the boatswain and his mates used their ratans unsparingly, to increase the joy of my arrival. Many a bitter malediction was growled by the Italians, whose eyes gleamed like those of coiled-up snakes; many a pious cry to God broke from the swarthy Algerines, who were there doing penance for the slavery to which their countrymen subjected those unhappy Christians who, by conquest or shipwreck, fell under their horrible dominion. A Moor of Barbary, or a corsair of Algeria, formed the fifth slave at every sweep. The poop was armed with a few brass swivel guns; and the standard, having the arms of Sicily quartered with those of Naples, was displayed from a tall staff, rigged aft, and hung drooping in deep folds over the water, which it swept at times, when agitated by the morning breeze.

The officers were the only men on board who wore their side-arms; the slaves were all too securely chained to be dreaded, notwithstanding their number.

By the captain, Guevarra, a pompous little Sicilian, I was formally welcomed on board "his majesty's galley *Sea-Horse*" (a phrase he was very fond of repeating),

and invited to breakfast with the officers in their little den under the poop. Here we were often in darkness, as the long folds of the standard obscured the windows; but when the wind wafted it aside, the full radiance of the rising sun glared in through the openings, on the light-blue uniforms, silver epaulettes, and weather-beaten visages of my entertainers; on the glass cups of smoking coffee and thick chocolate, a savoury ham, with piles of eggs, pyramids of bread, and all the appurtenances of the breakfast-table.

"Per Baccho!" said the captain—who, though a little man, was armed with a prodigious sabre, and wore a most extravagant pair of mustacheos—"per Baccho! signor," he continued, with a most bland Sicilian smile, "it would have been a particular favour, had the general sent you off to us last night; by this time we should have doubled Spartivento; and, as there is some word of a French line-of-battle ship being up the Gulf of Tarento, his valour who commands the *Amphion* will be impatient to be joined by his majesty's galley *Sea-Horse*.—Lieutenant, I'll trouble you for the maccaroons. We shall have some rough weather before evening, and these double-banked galleys ship every sea that strikes them.—The muffins?—with pleasure, signor.—And, truly, one is safer anchored close by the Tower of the Lantern, than exposed to a lee shore and all the damnable currents that run round Spartivento in the evening. But, believe me, signor, that his majesty's galley *Sea-Horse*—Boy! pass the word for more coffee."

"Si signor capitano," replied a little olive-cheeked urchin in shirt and trousers, who vanished with the silver coffee-pot.

"Considering the beauty of the morning, and the unclouded splendour of the sun, I trust," said I, "with all due submission to your better judgment, that you may prove a false prophet."

"Impossible, signor!" replied the Sicilian, who was doing ample justice to all the good things before him. "I have sailed in—an egg, thank you—in his majesty's galleys, for forty years, and know every shoal, current, rock, and sign of the Italian seas, better than the boasted Palinurus of old—Better? said I. Bah! I hold him to be an arrant blockhead, and no seaman, to resign his

helm to Signor Morpheus, whose 'Stygian dew' I believe to have been a big-bellied flask of most potent Gioja or French brandy."

"But Palinurus was an accursed heathen, like his master, misnamed the 'pious Æneas;' and, having no saint to patronize him, could expect nothing else than mishaps," said one of the lieutenants.

"Right, Vinoni," replied the captain; "but we, sailors of his majesty of Sicily, are the Madonna's peculiar care. Faugh! a tarantella in the cream-pot and fire-flies in the marmalade. Yes, Signor Dundas," he continued, resuming his former theme, "there is a regular hurricane gathering, though from what point I cannot quite determine. Last night, the yellow moon rose above the Calabrian hills, surrounded by a luminous halo,—a sure sign of a tough gale, which Madonna avert; what is worse, we may have it in our teeth, blowing right ahead, before we round yonder Capo del Armi. On our voyage from Palermo, yesterday, as we passed through the Lipari Isles, they were covered by a white vapour,—a sure sign of a north-east wind; but though the shore lies on our lee, his majesty's galley can always use her sweeps, and give it a wide berth."

"But did you not remark, signor," said Vinoni, "that before we came in sight of the Pharo, the mist had floated away from the Lipari, and the mouth of Stromboli threw clear flames across the sky, whilst the waves smoked and growled with a remarkable noise,—all sure tokens of a land breeze."

"Right, Vinoni!" said the captain, whose opinion was generally formed on that of his lieutenant: "right, corpo! I feel it blowing down the Straits at this moment, and the white foam that curls before it on the water, announces a coming squall."

Leaving these weather-wise Italians to settle the matter as they chose, I walked forward, to observe the accommodation and construction of this peculiar vessel. She was now under weigh, and, though strained from stem to stern by every stroke of the sweeps, she moved through the water with a motion so easy and rapid, that her officers had little occasion to dread either contrary winds or tides.

The broad-bladed sweeps brushed the ocean into foam, which roared in surf beneath the sharp bows, boiling away

under the counter, and leaving astern a long white wake in the glittering sea. The sun was now up, and his rosy morning light cast a warm glow over land and ocean.

Captain Guevarra stood beside me on the poop, and pointed out the different towns, mountains, and headlands, as we moved down the Straits: his observations proved amusing, from the strange compound of knowledge and ignorance, religion, superstition, and vanity, they exhibited.

We were soon in mid-channel: the fruitful shore of old Trinacria, studded with innumerable towns and villages, nestling on the green hills, embosomed among the richest foliage, or shining along the sandy and sunny beach, rose in succession on the view, while piles of picturesque mountains closed the background, — and soon, chief amongst them all, gigantic Etna reared up its mighty cone, appearing to rise from the watery horizon on our starboard bow. From its yawning crater, a lengthened column of light vapour ascended into the pure air, in one steady, straight, and unbroken line, piercing the pale-blue immensity of space, and rising to an altitude where, in the soft regions of upper air, it was for ever lost to the eye.

As the range of the Neptunian hills, and the town of Messina,—with its large cathedral, its numerous churches and convents, its terraced streets, sweeping round swelling eminences, and its busy harbour crowded by a forest of masts,—closed, lessened, and sank astern, the bay of Reggio, on the other hand, opened to our view, with all the spires and casements of its town gleaming in the beams of the morning sun, the high peaks of its hills behind covered to the summit with dark-green pines, and fragrant orange or citron trees. The galley-slaves were now pulling with all their strength, to make headway against the strong current which runs towards Cape Pelorus, but we soon got clear of the eddies, and moved through the water with astonishing speed.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE RACE.—GALLEY-SLAVES.

"YONDER is Rhegium, signor," said the Captain Guevarra, "where Æolus dwelt before he removed his government over to Sicily, and where he sold fair winds to mariners, and tied the foul ones up in paper bags—the cursed heathen! And yet it would be some advantage if such commodities could be purchased in these vulgar modern days. I have known the time when I would have given sixty pieces of gold for a single puff of fair wind; but that was before I had the honour of commanding his majesty's galley *Sea-Horse*, and all those stout rogues who work it. Ah! Madonna mia!" he ejaculated, crossing himself, as we walked on the weather side of the poop; "what is all this I have been saying? Our Lady of Sicily forgive me the thought, and keep me contented with such winds as pass over the sea, without buying from heathen, heretic, or devil! Viva! how bravely the old *Sea-Horse* shoots through the water! Believe me, Signor Dundas, there is not another galley in the service of his Sicilian majesty equalling this, for strength, speed, and beauty of mould."

"Yet there is a little vessel yonder, cracking on under every stitch of canvas, which seems able and disposed to beat you."

"Beat the *Sea-Horse*—beat his majesty's galley!" cried the little commander, stamping his feet on the deck. "Corpo di Baccho! if any man on board, save yourself, signor, had even hinted that such a thing was possible, I would have dropped him from the yard-arm, with a forty-pound shot at his heels; I would, this instant—I, Gandolfo Guevarra."

After this outburst, I did not venture on another remark, and we walked up and down in silence. Between us and Cape Pillari, a swift little Maltese schooner, of a most rakish cut, was flying through the water, with her snow-white canvas shining in the sun, and bellying out to the breeze, while her flashing sweeps were moving, stroke for stroke, with those of the galley, which she was evidently leaving astern. She was low-built, almost level with the water, which she cleft like an arrow.

"Ola! the boatswain," cried Guevarra, perspiring with rage, which made every fibre of his little body quiver, while he twisted his long mustaches, and looked fierce as a rat at bay. "By the blood of Gennaro! that villanous craft is leaving us astern. Shall a runaway of Malta, laden with base merchandise, beat his majesty's galley the *Sea-Horse?* No, no—Madonna! Quick, rascal! there, fly-flap the shoulders of the oarsmen, or your own shall smart before sunset. And you, signor—master-gunner."

"Si, signor illustrissimo."

"Ready—the gun there, forward; to teach these vagabonds to keep their distance, and not attempt to rival those who sail under his majesty's pennant."

The forecastle-piece was double-shotted, and cleared away for action; while the boatswain and his mates flew from stem to stern, lashing unmercifully the bare shoulders of the slaves, with as little remorse as one would the flanks of a vicious horse. Tremendous curses and horrible blasphemies followed this application of the ratans, and the unhappy wretches toiled until their swarthy skins were deluged in perspiration, which mingled with the blood streaming from their lacerated backs. The storm of maledictions soon died away, their exhausted strength requiring that they should work in silence; and I looked on, in pity and disgust, while the miserable beings toiled at the ponderous oars, with measured action, which strained every muscle to its utmost power of tension. On glancing along the rows of black-browed, unshaven, and lowering visages, I read one expression in them all—a fearful one! Of what demoniac minds were those stern eyes the index! A thirst for vengeance, rather than for freedom, animated their savage Italian hearts; every bosom was a hell of pent-up passion—every man a chained fiend.

The sweeps were moved by each gang rising simultaneously from their bench, and then resuming the sitting position; again rising, and again sitting, without a moment's respite from toil; and if any man failed to exert himself sufficiently, every slave at that particular sweep received the same number of blows as the delinquent. Such, Guevarra, informed me, was the unjust rule in his majesty's galleys. One poor wretch dropped dead; and, while a shower of blows was distributed to his four comrades, to make them work harder, the iron-hearted boat-

swain, unlocked with a master-key the padlock which held the chain, and the body was flung into the deep. Many a glance of envy followed it, as it disappeared beneath the bright green water, and once more groans of grief and growls of smothered rage broke forth; but, though the slaves toiled on till the galley seemed to fly through the water, the little scampavia still kept ahead of her.

"Work! work! or beware the scurlada," cried the boatswain, who now flourished a gigantic whip, beneath the whisk of which every slave cowered instinctively. "Ahi, Frà Maso, different work this from mumbling Latin at Palermo," he cried, bestowing a burning lash on the back of one who had been a priest; "work, work, sloths, if you wish not your hides flayed off. Ola! you, there, with the nose like Ovid, and face like the O of Giotto, dost think thou art selling paste buckles at Messina once more? Bend to the oar, Maestro Naso, or feel *that!*"

A yell burst from the unhappy Israelite, as the terrible lash ploughed up his tender skin, while the task-master continued:—"Work, work! pull away larboard and starboard; give way, my beauties, if you would have life left you to behold the sun set. Bravo, my merry little devil at the bow-oar; you seem a very Cicero, and look as if born with the sweep in your hand."

A laugh, rising into a yell, at the bow, attracted my attention, and, on going forward, I perceived the hunchback, Gaspare Truffi, tugging away at the first oar, which he pulled in conjunction with three men, his strength being deemed equal to that of two slaves.

As I stepped along the gangway, scowling and imploring glances were cast upon me, by the swart and naked oarsmen. I could not resist saying in a low voice,

"Poor men! truly I pity you!"

These words were not thrown away.

"Madonna bless thee, Signor Inglese," said he who had been called Frà Maso; "like thy countrymen, thou art merciful!"

"Merciful! bah!" cried Truffi; "have I not seen them scourge their brave soldiers like dogs—even as we are now scourged!"

I watched the exertions of the powerful hunchback with surprise; he toiled away with what appeared most decided good-will, without receiving a single blow from

the boatswain, although his conical hump and shaggy breast presented prominent marks for the taskmaster's scourge. His aspect was grotesque beyond description, as he tugged away and strained until every muscle in his deformed body seemed about to snap; his matted black hair overhung his fierce twinkling eyes, and a forest of the same material fringed his capacious mouth, which every instant sent forth a yell or a shout of laughter. On my approach, he bent to the oar with redoubled fury, raving and howling, while he spat towards me, in token of hatred and undying enmity. With more astonishment than commiseration, with more disgust than pity, I regarded this curious little desperado, whose hideous form contrasted so strongly with the powerful and herculean frames of the other slaves; their bodies, naked to the waist, and having every muscle hardened to rigidity by excessive toil, presented in almost every instance perfect models for the artist and sculptor.

A half-stifled sob—a hurried exclamation—caused me to turn towards a fine-looking old slave, to whose antique contour of head and face additional dignity was lent by a venerable beard, which swept his breast. Never shall I forget the glance with which his keen, dark eyes regarded me; his features had all that noble regularity and proud contour which are often found in old Italian portraits; but there was a stern expression of care in them, and the hard contracted lines of his face showed a long acquaintance with grief, or an exquisite degree of mental agony. It was the Major Gismondo! Alas! how changed now was the brave old cavalry officer—the once gay cicisbeo of the fashionable viscontessa!

"Here! you here?" I exclaimed.

"Well may you wonder that I survive," said he, the blood suffusing his temples when our eyes met; but he was compelled to turn away, the whip of the boatswain at that moment descended on his shoulders, and I returned to the poop. My heart bled for the unmerited misery and degradation of the poor old man; but to converse with him was quite contrary to etiquette and orders. On questioning Guevarra concerning him—

"I trust, signor," said he, "you will excuse me; but it is impossible for a captain of his majesty's galleys to know the biography of every rogue who tugs at the benches." He coloured, with manifest confusion.

"A droll fellow, that hunchback, who pulls the bow-oar."

"Ah!" replied Guevarra, "a perfect imp of Etna; I am very much indebted to my good friend, the visconte Santugo, for sending him off to me yesterday. He was caught lurking near the villa d'Alfieri by the soldiers who guard it. Per Baccho! I was half frightened when I saw him on board—ha, ha! he has all the aspect of a stunted Cyclop, and works so well, that he has a fair prospect of being promoted to the rank of task-master. He laughs, chuckles, and sings incessantly, but for what reason is beyond my comprehension, as there is nothing here but hard work, heavy blows, and scanty provender—unless we except the honour of serving in his majesty's galley *Sea-Horse*. Diavolo!" he cried, rushing to the other side of the poop, "the Maltese schooner has passed us. Pull, rascals—give way ye lubberly Padri—give way fore and aft! Shall the gallant *Cavallo Marino*, the flower of our galleys, and the peculiar care of our thrice-blessed Madonna, be beaten by a d——d scampavia?" He bowed and crossed himself with great devotion before a little gilt figure of the Virgin, which occupied a niche in the centre of a row of brightly-painted buckets, ranged along the top of the poop. But Madonna was sued in vain. Again the whistling ratans were flourished on all sides; even Gaspare Truffi did not escape, and his elfish yell sounded shrill as the whistle of a steam-engine, when the blows descended on his naked hump.

On—on shot the scampavia, and the lofty galley toiled after her in vain; the former carried a press of canvas sufficient to run her under the water, which flashed like blue fire before her sharp prow, and she shipped sea after sea, as we rounded the Capo del Armi, and the snow-clad summit of Etna sank beneath the dim horizon astern; the water was getting rough, the breeze increasing, and it was evident that she must take in sail or be capsized. A half-smothered cheer arose from her crew, who crowded her side, as they saw us rapidly dropping astern.

Boundless was the wrath of Guevarra; he stamped about the deck, while his long sword became entangled at every stride with his little bandy legs: he curled his bushy whiskers, fumed and blasphemed like a pagan.

Save the slaves, all on board, more or less, partook of his chagrin; while smiling at his rage, even I could not avoid a feeling of annoyance, for one becomes jealous of being passed at sea, or beaten by a rival mail, or getting the "go-by" from a friend's team on a country road.

"By the miraculous blood of Gennaro! I will teach these mongrel curs, these Arabian Maltese, to beware how they try speed with his majesty's galley. Is the gun ready there forward?"

"All ready, Signor Capitano," replied the gunner, taking the tompion from the lofty forecastle-piece, and lighting his match.

"Then give them a shot between wind and water. Madonna speed the ball—fire!"

The helmsman brought the galley's head round, and the thirty-two pounder was levelled and fired. The *Sea-Horse* shook with the concussion; the shot whistled over the water; a breach was made in the low bulwarks of the Maltese, and a shower of white splinters flew away to leeward. The schooner was immediately thrown in the wind; down came her fore and main topsails, her jib and staysail, like lightning on her deck, while the scarlet flag of Britain was run up to her gaff-peak. The galley shot ahead; her great latteen sail, that tapered away and aloft, was braced sharp up, and once more we flew forward, while the Maltese did not again begin to make sail, until she was a league or so astern.

"Bravissimo, *Sea-Horse!*" said Guevarra, clapping his hands in glee. "*Now* we are leaving her, hand over hand."

In the ardour of the race, he had not been paying due attention to his course; and, in keeping to seaward of the scampavia, which was probably bound for the Venetian Gulf, the galley was further from the land than she ought to have been; her head was turned northward, and, as we slowly approached the Apennine chain, the promontory of Hercules rose gradually on the view.

We now made but little progress; the breeze had died away; the heat of the day was intense, for the sirocco was abroad, and the air was glittering with sulphury particles, blown, probably, from the peak of Etna. Wearied with their late exertions, the over-tasked slaves, exposed to the broiling sun, sat gazing listlessly, with their glaring

and bloodshot eyes, on the glassy sea; and even the ratan of the drowsy and perspiring boatswain failed to rouse them from their apathy. The little way we made was solely owing to the large square mainsail; and, though the galley lay close to the scarcely perceptible current of air, our progress was not a mile an hour; yet, long before the setting sun began to redden the blue Ionian Sea, Guevarra had the mortification to see the little Maltese pull with her sweeps round the promontory and disappear.

During the weary noon of that scorching day, while the wretched slaves sat naked at their oars, exposed to the fierce bright sun, Guevarra and his officers were seated under a cool awning on the poop, enjoying their siesta, after a luncheon of light fruits and lighter wines, while the boatswain, his mates, the gunner and *his* mates, chewed their maccaroni, and drank cold water, under a similar contrivance, on the forecastle. Miserable was the plight of the poor unpitied slaves; chained to the oaken bench, which formed their seat when they toiled, and their bed when they slept, and on which they were alternately exposed by noon to the broiling heat of an Italian meridian, and by night to the chill blasts of the ocean; half naked, continually suffering castigation, fed on the worst and coarsest food, and packed so closely, that dreadful diseases were continually breaking out among them.

The day became closer; not a breath stirred the languid, breezeless air; the sea-birds floated on the still bosom of the glassy deep, and the mainsail flapped heavily on the mast as the galley rolled on the slow-heaving ground swell. She was drifted shoreward by the currents: in the afternoon we were close to the land, and I began to fear that my journey to Crotona would be of longer duration than the general expected.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE REVOLT OF THE GALLEY-SLAVES.

It was night—beautiful night! The cold, pale moon gleamed on the waste of waters, on the silent shore, on the hills of Magna Græcia, and on the wide Ionian Sea. Ten thousand luminous animalculæ glittered in its briny depth, as if to rival the bright stars above, while the white columns on a distant promontory,—the last relics of a people, a power, and a creed that have passed away,—the wooded mountains, and the pebbled beach, and Albanian Bova, the towers of Theodosia, La Bianca, and other towns, rose in succession on our view, all glittering in the radiance of that broad and lovely moon.

A guitar broke the silence, accompanied by a clear voice: it was young Vinoni, chanting a verse of Pignotti's "Novella," beginning with "Donne leggiadre, allorche," &c.

> "Woman enchanting! when I look on thy form,
> And behold the soft graces of lip, cheek, and hair;
> And thy bosom of snow, nature's loveliest charm,
> Ah! who would not kiss it, and love to die there?
> Sweet to behold the unsullied snow!
> The dark eye that rolls———"

"Come, come, caro tenente, stop your twangling, and make sail on the galley!" cried Guevarra, starting up from the sleep he had enjoyed under the awning since dinner. "Corpo di Baccho! here comes the breeze at last," he continued, snuffing it over the quarter; "and the tunny-fish—ah! the fine fellows, see how they are passing us in shoals."

Humming "Donne leggiadre," &c., the lieutenant relinquished his guitar, and looked intently over the quarter.

"Ha! Signor Guevarra, I knew that the clear fires of Stromboli betokened something—behold!" As he spoke, a heavy and dense bank of clouds spread from the northern horizon, and gradually veiled the whole sky; the moon disappeared, or shot forth her lustre only at times on the whitening waves; the sea became black, and the land loomed close and high. The mainsail filled as the breeze freshened, and the boatswain warned the slaves to prepare for hard work.

The darkness was now dense, and I felt, I knew not why, considerable anxiety as to the issue of the night. The little captain generally about this time retired to his cabin, to enjoy, alone, his cigar and a glass of lacrima, resigning the command to Vinoni. The features of the young lieutenant were clouded with care, or by some gloomy presentiment; he often walked to windward, to watch the weather and look at the waves, which the rushing breeze edged with white. Suddenly he ordered the great mainsail to be furled, and all made snug for the night.

"Out sweeps: give way there forward!" The shrill pipe of the boatswain echoed his command, and a commotion immediately took place among the slaves, who had hitherto been sitting, silent and motionless, in the dark. From the bosom of the startled deep, a fierce yell arose. Imagine my astonishment and the horror of Vinoni, on beholding the galley-slaves, instead of resuming their monotonous labour at the oar, spring up at once from their benches, and rush, some forward and some aft, shouting like devils or maniacs broken loose.

A desperate but momentary conflict ensued: most of the seamen were tossed overboard, while the rest were driven below the forecastle. Vinoni, brave to rashness, sprang to the front of the poop, and, drawing from his belt pistols (which the galley-officers were never without), he fired, and a slave fell bleeding on the deck; then rushing to the swivel-guns, he slued them round, to sweep the waist,—but they were without matches, and useless. Instinctively I drew my sabre, but old Gismondo threw his arms around me.

"Madman!" he exclaimed, "would you tempt the unfettered fury of two hundred and fifty ruffians, the fiercest in Italy,—men whom years of slavery, tyranny, and toil, have transformed into demons? Sheath your sword, signor—I alone can protect you." I returned my sabre to its scabbard, but a groan burst from me on beholding what followed.

"Corpo di Baccho! what is all this?" cried the captain, rushing upon the poop; "eh! a mutiny—a revolt in his majesty's——" in a moment he was borne over, and dashed to the deck by the hunchback, who instantly brained poor Vinoni with one blow of a handspike. With one of his elfish laughs, he was rushing upon me, whirling his club

aloft; and, but for the stern intervention of Signor Gismondo, my campaign and my days had ended together. By what agency he exercised authority over these lawless spirits, I know not, but the most forward of them slunk away, to continue the work of slaughter elsewhere: and frightful were the outcries and din around us, as the task-masters and mariners perished beneath the weaponless hands, and even the teeth, of those over whom they had so long tyrannized. In one minute, the galley was in the possession of the slaves; and the unfortunate captain, his boatswain, and two or three Sicilians of his crew, were dragged along the benches, bound with cords.

"Follow me—this way, signor—ere worse come of your remaining on deck," said Gismondo, hurrying me into a cabin, and shutting the sliding-door. "I will forget," he added, with an icy smile, "how coldly and cruelly you stood by while my—my daughter, was murdered by that high-born ruffian, Bivona. May his race perish, or be followed by a curse to its latest generation!"

"Keenly at this moment do I feel the reproach,—yet what could I do?"

"Had you not a sabre?" he asked, with fierce contempt. "Her death—it slaked not the thirsty vengeance of our accursed chiefs—they sent me to these galleys——" he threw himself on a locker, and covered his face with his hands.

How full of excitement and of agony was that time to me! Sad were the cries for pity, uttered to the pitiless—for mercy from those who had never received it, and knew it not—which mingled with the hideous uproar that reigned on the creaking deck above us. I heard plunge after plunge, as the corded victims were flung overboard by the desperate revolters, who, to refine upon cruelty, tied them back to back, and so hurled them into the seething waves, without the least chance of escape.

At last, all was silent; the plunges were heard no more, and the last cry of despair had died away on the wind: I heard the heavy sweeps once more dipping in the water, and knew, by the straining of the timbers and clatter of the thole-pins, that the *Sea-Horse* was under weigh again.

"I hope, major, your late companions do not mean to carry me off a prisoner!"

"No," he replied, gloomily, "and your life is safe.

These unhappy men have no cause to be your enemies—you will be shortly sent ashore."

"But how were you all enabled to break loose, as if by magic?"

"The little hunchback, whom I verily believe to be Satan, possessed strength sufficient to wrench his fetters in two; he then stole the master-key from the belt of the boatswain, as he slept beside the windlass; it was handed along the banks of oars—up the larboard and down the starboard benches—each slave in succession unlocking his manacles, until it came to me, when I opened the accursed padlock, and flung it, fetters, key, and all, into the ocean."

"And these ruffians——"

"Will form no mean recruit to Francatripa, Benincasa, or some of those other robber chiefs who divide the hills and forests of Calabria among them."

At that moment, we heard the splash of a quarter-boat, as it was hastily lowered down from the davits.

"Signor," said Gismondo, rising, "the boat awaits you, and the sooner we separate the better. A den such as this, crowded with these poor wretches, whom servile labour and the lash have degraded to the condition of brutes, cannot be agreeable to one in the honourable station of a cavalier—a soldier—such as I once was in happier days. Adieu!" he pressed my hand, and led me to the side of the galley, where the boat was held close to the ladder by Frà Maso and three other slaves, who had chosen to land on that part of the coast.

"You accompany me, of course, Signor Major?" said I.

"Never! Broken in spirit—degraded as I am—this naked body—these scars: away, leave me to my misery! leave me! These poor men, at least, will not shrink from—adieu! Signor Dundas—adieu! Frà Maso—shove off!"

Before descending into the boat, I was compelled to deliver up my watch and purse; my sabretache was searched, but returned to me, when found to contain only military letters and papers. I should probably have been deprived of my epaulettes, but, as they were my fighting pair, they had become so tarnished by smoke and weather, that the searchers allowed them to pass unnoticed.

Gaspare Truffi had now succeeded poor little Guevarra

in command of "his majesty's galley," as the reward of his strength and cunning. He was seated in Madonna's niche, on the poop, kicking his heels, swinging his long arms like the sails of a mill, shrieking, swearing, and drinking from a flask of lacrima, by turns. About twenty sweeps were manned, but the greater number of slaves were busy rummaging every lockfast place in search of plunder.

The night was black and stormy; not a star was visible, and the dark outline of the land rose up high and gloomily above us. We heard the boom of the white breakers, as they rolled on the rocky and silent shore, and their echoes mingled with the dash of the long sweeps, as the galley was pulled away, and disappeared in the obscurity around us.

When again I met the Signor Gismondo, it was under very different circumstances: more fortunate than myself, he reached Crotona next day, and was protected by the duke di Bagnara, who gave him a command in his battalion of the Free Calabri.

We were soon amidst the surf; and as the boat shipped sea after sea, we were quickly drenched to the skin. While I sat shivering in the stern-sheets, the four rescued slaves pulled on in silence, and with all their strength, lifting the light shallop out of the water at every stroke, in their eagerness to tread on earth once more. How joyously and strongly they seemed to stretch their now unfettered limbs! Having the tiller-ropes, I steered the boat towards a piece of sandy beach, which we discerned through the gloom; and, not without fear of crashing on some concealed rock, I saw its head shoot into a narrow creek, between two jutting crags, against which the eastern current of the Ionian Sea was running in mountains of angry foam. In consequence of the boat's headway, the fury with which she was pulled, and the strength of the current, she was run up high and dry on the beach, with a concussion that nearly tossed us all out on the sand. The rowers leaped up with a triumphant shout of "Buon viaggio, Signor Inglese!" and, springing away towards the hills, left me to my own reflections.

Behold me, then, in a most desolate condition: landed at midnight on the sea-shore, in a remote part of Calabria, —the lawless land of robbery and outrage,—then "the *terra incognita* of Europe," minus my valise and purse,

and without a guide. The rogues had stripped me of everything, save Bianca's dear little ring, the diamond of which my thick leathern glove had concealed from their prying eyes.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE THREE CANDLE-ENDS.

For some time I sat by the sea-shore, reflecting on what course to pursue, until the increased howling of the wind, the roar of the surf, and a drop or two of rain splashing on my face, announced that a rough morning was coming on. Not knowing whom I might encounter, I regretted the want of my pistols. Stumbling landward from the rocky beach, I succeeded in discovering a rude flight of steps, hewn in the balsaltic rocks which faced the sea; but so obscure was all around, that, on gaining the summit, I knew not whether the dark chaotic masses before me were a bank of clouds, or the termination of the long chain of the Apennines.

In a short time, I perceived a light twinkling through the gloom, and could discern a little bay or harbour, where three small craft lay at anchor, close under the lee of the high land. A narrow path brought me to a neat little cottage, over the low roof of which the vines clambered, mingling with the orange-trees, which raised their rich foliage and golden fruit above the sea-beat promontory. The wind was increasing, the clouds began to whirl and break, the rain to descend, and a single star, red, bright, and fiery, sparkling on the dark and distant horizon, was lost at times, as the billows of the Ionian main tumbled and rolled between it and me. Gladly I knocked at the cottage door, and, after a long delay, an aged domestic appeared at a loop or slit, through which the rays of her lamp shot forth, radiating into the gloom; she seemed unable to understand, and unwilling to admit me.

"Open the door," said a man's voice, "should it be a robber, what have we to fear? I never harmed the brigands, and they dare not to meddle with me."

I expected, from this defying and confident tone, to behold some very ferocious personage when the door was opened, and was therefore agreeably surprised on being welcomed by a reverend old man, with silver hairs, and a most

patriarchal beard flowing from a pleasing and benevolent countenance. It was my old friend, the Basilian priest of Squillaci, and we immediately recognized each other. On my apologizing for disturbing him at an hour so unreasonable, he replied,—

"Say no more, signor; I am the priest of this district, and my door is open to all; from the great lord to the poor lazzarone, all are equally welcome here. But thrice welcome the soldier; for, though now but a poor padre, I have borne arms in my youth, and fought in the wars of Charles of Parma, and I love the sight of a soldier, for the sake of the thoughts of other years."

In the snug room of the Basilian, with my feet on the fire-pan of charcoal, I partook of a slight supper, and related the seizure of the galley and the destruction of her officers and crew—a tale which filled the gentle old Greek with horror. I then recurred to the urgent nature of my despatches, and the dilemma in which I found myself, in consequence of being stripped of everything requisite to enable me to pursue my journey.

"Keep yourself easy, signor," said my host; "a little craft, bound northward, put into the harbour below, a few hours after sunset, to repair some damage sustained at sea, and I have no doubt her master will, at my request, be happy to land you at Crotona."

I was well pleased to hear this. After a little more conversation, the Basilian retired, and I slept till sunrise upon his sofa, with my cloak over me.

The skipper of whom he had spoken came to breakfast with us, and I discovered he had charge of the scampavia which had suffered from the *Sea-Horse's* forecastle gun. Her starboard bulwark and part of her mainmast had been so much injured, that he had run into the little cove for the double purpose of repairing the damage and waiting till the threatened squall blew past.

Maestro Maltei was, as his name imports, a thorough Maltese—quick-sighted, polite, and intelligent. His features displayed all the national peculiarities of his race; the black, shining Arabian eyes, thick lips, and swarthy visage. He was a stout man, upwards of thirty, and clad in a yellow cotton shirt, embroidered on the breast and sleeves; over it he wore an ample vest of red velvet, adorned with innumerable little silver buttons; a long silk scarf encircled his waist, and retained his sheathed

knife, and on his head he wore a long tri-coloured woollen cap, which hung down his back below the waistband of his white cotton breeches. He had rings in his ears, and a rosary round his neck: altogether, Maestro Maltei, though he had much of the pirate in his aspect, was, in reality, as smart a nautical dandy as one could see in these days lounging about the galley-arches at Malta.

After breakfast, he returned on board, promising to send for me when ready to put to sea. Anxious to proceed, I watched from the windows of the priest's house the operations of the carpenter busy at work, though the weather was lowering, and torrents of rain fell at intervals during the day, which dragged on slowly. I soon became heartily tired of the Basilian, who bored me, for six consecutive hours, with an essay he was writing on the lives of two eminent ancients—Quintius Ennius, a Calabrian, the friend of Scipio and Lælius, author of eighteen books of metrical annals, and tragedies, epigrams, and satires innumerable; and Aurelius Cassiodorus, a Roman patrician and minister of Theodric, who founded a great monastery near Squillaci, where he wrote a history of the Goths.

Politeness compelled me to endure complacently the learned pedantry of the reverend father, to whose hospitality I was so much indebted; but I rejoiced when the bare-legged mate of the *Santelmo* approached with the information that she was ready to put to sea. Immediately after dinner, I went on board, with my ears ringing with the Grecian's sonorous voice, and the epigrams, satires, and witty sayings of the immortal Quintius, whom I had never heard of before, and have seldom heard of since.

The weather, which had been alternately cloudy and sunny, now settled down into a dull grey evening; the whole sky became canopied by dusky vapour, which towards sunset was streaked with a pale, stormy yellow; the saffron sun was seen for a few minutes, as it sank behind the hills of Oppido, and, as the light died away, the sea turned gloomy and black. The wind blew in gusts, and the billows rolled on the beach with a hollow sound: everything betokened a rough night; but the Maltese were ready for sea, and the warps were cast off. I had some misgivings about sailing in such weather, but concealed my anxiety. The other two craft, a xebecque and a sloop, remained at

anchor, and their crews showed no sign of preparing for sea. I spoke of this to Maestro Maltei, and asked if he thought they expected rough weather.

"Probably they do, signor," said he, removing his cigar, as he walked to and fro on the weather side of the quarter-deck, while the fleet schooner flew onward, straining under her bellying canvas. "The masters are timid Venetians, and the sailors tremble for their share of the cargo."

"Then stormy weather *is* expected?"

"Doubtless we shall have a dirty night; but, having repaired all the damage done by that cursed shot, and, moreover, having received from my very good friend, the Basilian father, three sacred wax candles, which have burned before the shrine of Our Lady of Bova, after being duly blessed and sanctified by the bishop of Cosenza——"

"And with these——"

"We light our binnacle, and no danger can overwhelm us."

"On the faith of these, you put to sea on a stormy night! —three old candle-ends——"

"Undoubtedly, signor," said he, turning away abruptly, while I was equally annoyed by his folly and ignorance.

The *Santelmo*, as she was named, was a smart little schooner, with a lofty, tapering mainmast; she was broad in the beam, but sharp at the bows, where an image of her saintly patron spread his arms above the deep. Her well-scrubbed decks were flush and white, while the brass plates on her four carronades, her binnacle-lamps, and the copper on her sides, were all polished, and shone like burnished gold. She was gaudily painted, and straight as a lance from stem to stern. With all her snowy canvas set, we ran along the coast, favoured by the land-breeze, and soon saw the lights of Gierazzo and the Locrian temples of Palepoli vanish behind us in the dusk. Upon a wind, the *Santelmo* sailed admirably, and midnight saw us far beyond the Capo Stilo; but the breeze had increased so much, that, notwithstanding his intense faith in the candle-ends, Maltei was obliged to take in sail. Still more tough grew the gale; the night became darker; the high outline of the Calabrian hills could be discerned no more, and the breaking sea was covered with white foam. The miraculous candles had been lighted in the binnacle with

great formality by the cabin-boy, on his bare knees, imploring, at the same time, in the names of St. Elmo and St. John of Malta, a peaceful night for the master and crew.

The blessed candles burned and sputtered merrily; the bushy-whiskered and grim-visaged timoniere hitched up his cotton breeches, twitched down the net which confined his long black hair, and grasped the helm in confident silence. But harder blew the wind; it roared through the rigging, and the *Santelmo* was soon flying through the rolling sea, stripped of half her canvas.

The mate slung himself from the spritsail-yard, and, when endeavouring to place a candle in the hand of the image on the cutwater, dropped overboard, and (poor fellow!) was seen no more. The sailors now became excited.

"Clew up the fore-topsail—in with the fore-staysail! Saints and devils! be quick, will you!" yelled Maltei, through his speaking-trumpet. "Close reef the foresail, and take in everything else fore and aft. Per Baccho!—Our blessed Lady!—Devil in hell! Look sharp, will ye! Quick, there, or I will shoot the last man off the deck. Away, aloft, while ye can get out on the yard!" But not a man would venture, and Maltei might as well have roared to the wind.

"Corpo! you blundering asses, let all go by the sheets, then. Apostles and angels! Quick, cowards! let fly, or the masts will go by the board."

The order was obeyed; the cordage rattled, the blocks shrieked, the canvas flew to leeward, split to ribands, which crackled and lashed the rigging as they flapped on the furious wind; but we escaped a capsize, and the schooner skimmed along under her close-reefed foresail, while Maltei took the tiller, and strove to keep her to her course, swearing and praying by turns.

The loss of the mate and the increasing tempest rendered all gloomy and discontented. Anon, there was a cry. I instinctively grasped the bulwarks. A tremendous sea was shipped; it swept over the whole deck, washing three sailors, the long boat, all the spare booms and spars, overboard; also the binnacle, with the compass and—horror of horrors!—the three miraculous candles, which were extinguished in an instant.

A howl of dismay burst from the Maltese, who from that

time seemed to abandon all hope and exertion. For a moment, the schooner staggered and stood still; had such another sea burst over her, she must have foundered; but, saved by her buoyancy, as the water ran off her deck, she again plunged forward on her perilous path. A groan burst from Maltei on beholding the candles washed overboard; he quitted the helm, and abandoned the schooner to her fate.

"Signor Maltei—Padrone di Vascello—madman and blockhead!" I exclaimed, rushing towards the tiller, which snapped its ropes and was dashed to pieces in an instant. The *Sautelmo* fell away round, and yawing from side to side, flew at a fearful rate before the wind. There was a crash! the foremast went by the board, bringing the main-topmast down with it; the wreck fell to leeward, and was swept away astern, while the vessel lay a helpless log upon the sea, tossing about like a cork, and exposed continually to the waves, which hurried on in successive mountains, as if to overwhelm the shattered ship, rolling with fury over the deck, and burying her far into the deep, dark trough of the midnight sea. A torrent of water pouring down the companion-hatch filled the cabin; others succeeded; the vessel became water-logged, and the wood lumber in her hold alone prevented her from sinking.

"Holy Saint Elmo! blessed Madonna! and O Thou, who walked on the waters—who said to the storm, 'Be still,' and it was still—look upon us!" cried the survivors of the crew.

"Master Maltei," said I, bitterly, "you have thrown away your vessel, and the lives of all on board, by your despicable ignorance and want of seamanship. Your crew are cowards, and unworthy to sail under a British flag!" He made no reply; but, sunk in gloomy apathy, remained lashed to the capstan, while I secured myself similarly to the windlass; from stem to stern the bulwarks were totally gone, save a fragment which afforded me shelter at the bow.

When the storm lulled a little, I prevailed on the sailors to rig a sail forward with some canvas, and two spare spars brought up from below; and a jury foremast was soon set up, with a dexterity which showed what the men were capable of, if properly directed. Now, once more before the fierce hurricane, the sharp schooner drove on, with the speed of a galloping horse; but whether running

in full career against the rocks of Stilo, or away into the Ionian Sea, we had not the least idea. The seven survivors began to work at the pumps, and we all took heart anew as daylight slowly approached, and the long night, with its excitement and horror, passed away.

It came, the sunless morning—a grey sky, a black sea—a cold gloom everywhere. Afar off, we discerned land on the larboard-bow; but there was not a sail in sight, save a ship which rode securely under the coast, with her top-gallant-masts struck. I had no doubt it was the *Amphion* anchored off Cape della Colonna, the promontory so close to the place of my destination.

We were drenched to the skin, and had been so all night; we were without food, yet continued to toil at the pumps, which soon, to our great dismay, brought up clear water. The sea having torn away stern-post and rudder, the pumps were our only chance of safety; and the Maltese, encouraged by my example (more than that of their skipper), worked until they were sinking with fatigue. On, on we flew before the sweeping wind, and soon lost sight of

"Fair Lacinia, graced with Juno's fane."

Once more the mountains sank beneath the horizon, and soon nothing but sea and sky were around us, as we flew before the blast into the Gulf of Tarentum, where we were at the mercy of the wind and tide during the whole of that miserable day. The sailors became dejected; three quitted the pumps and betook themselves to prayer, and the leaks gained on us. Four men still continued to toil, exposed to every wave that washed over the defenceless deck, which was then almost level with the ocean, and the planking was so slippery, that we were in continual danger of being carried away to leeward.

"The sunless day went down;" night began to darken sea and sky, and we contemplated its approach with gloomy forebodings and absolute horror. The *Santelmo* now made less way, in consequence of the thoroughly wetted state of her cargo, which buried her to the chain-plates in the water, where she lurched and pitched heavily. When it was dark, the gale increased; not a star was visible, and the dense gloom thickened in every direction around us.

By breaking through a bulk-head, the carpenter con-

trived to get up a keg of brandy from the forehold, and with a reckless shout the sailors crowded around him. They drank copiously, and the liquor rendered them mad; they yelled and screamed, shaking their clenched hands at the storm in defiance, reviling the Basilian and his candles, and cursing St. Elmo, whose head the carpenter clove with his hatchet.

In the midst of this ghastly merriment, while they were dancing furiously, hand in hand, over the slippery deck, a tremendous sea took us right amidship. I saw it coming on, dark, heaving, and terrible—a roaring mountain of liquid blackness—and embraced the windlass with all the strength with which despair and love of life endued me. In irresistible fury, the stupendous wave rolled its mighty volume over the wreck; when it passed away, I was *alone*. It had swept, into the boiling sea, every one of them. A cry came feebly on the bellowing wind, and all was over. I heard only the hiss of the dashing spray, and the plunging of the wreck, as alternately it rose on the crest of a wave, and thundered down into the yawning ocean. I had bound myself securely to the windlass with my sash, and my principal fear was, that the water-logged hull might sink, for in such a sea, and when so far from land, swimming would be unavailing.

O, the multiplied horrors of that dismal night! How gladly, amid that intense ocean, Solitude, I would have hailed the sound of a human voice—a glimpse of the distant shore—a gleam from a lonely star. Strange visions of home and happiness—of sunny fields and green, moving woods—floated before me. Then came other scenes and sounds; the boom of cannon and the roll of the drums. Now I was leading on my stormers at Scylla; anon, I was with Bianca—I heard her soft, low voice, her sweet Italian tone, and her gentle hand clasped mine— * * *

CHAPTER XL.

WHO IS HE?

FROM a state of dreamy apathy—a delirium between sleeping and waking; the very fever of desperation—the increased roar of ocean aroused me. Through the sullen gloom I discerned, ahead, a mighty barrier of rocks, against which the sea was running with incredible fury, casting the foam of its breakers to the clouds, and hurrying the wreck onwards to total destruction. I heard my heart beat; the critical moment was come, for safety or destruction. I drew off my boots, buttoned up the despatches in the breast of my coat, and casting another glance at that frowning, sable, and appalling barrier of rock, felt my heart sink within me; yet that heart had never quailed in the breach, or on the battle-field.

An exclamation of sincere piety escaped my lips, and suppliantly my hands were raised to heaven. Next moment there was a frightful crash! the parting wreck sank beneath me, the deck split under my feet, and I was struggling breathlessly in the dark water, amid the dashing breakers, which were covered with froth and foam, and fragments of spare masts, yards, ribs, cargo, planks, &c.; from these I received more than one severe blow; while blinded with spray, sick at heart, and trembling in every nerve, I swam towards this black and terrible shore. Thrice my hand touched the slippery rocks, and thrice the greedy waves sucked me back into their whirling vortex; but one flung me headlong forward on a ledge, and I grasped, convulsively, the strong, tough sea-weed which grew on its beetling face.

Fervently thanking heaven for my escape, I clambered up the slippery cliffs, beyond the reach of the breakers, whose bitter and heavy spray beat over me incessantly. After stopping for a few minutes to recover breath, and recall my scattered energies, I ascended to the summit; the level country spread before me, and a few lights sparkling at a distance, announced a neighbouring town. A distant bell tolled the eleventh hour as I walked forward along a road bordered by trees; but my knees bent tremulously at every step, for I felt still the roll of the

ship and the dull boom of the ocean, and the hiss of its salt frothy breakers yet rang in my ears.

As if its object had been accomplished in the destruction of the little schooner, the storm, which had raged so long, now began to die away; the trees became less agitated; the veil of dark clouds, which had obscured the face of heaven, withdrew, and the silver stars were seen sparkling in the blue dome above.

Though rejoicing in my safety, and pitying the poor fellows who had perished, I moved on in dread and doubt, shivering with cold and misery. My uniform was drenched with salt-water, and stuck close to me, and my head and feet were without covering. I longed to learn whether fate had thrown me on the Calabrian shore, or on that of Otranto; if on the latter, I felt certain of becoming a prisoner to the French, whose commanders often displayed, at that time, more of the savage spirit of the Revolutionists, than of that chivalry which distinguished the brave soldiers of the empire. When I thought on the many years of captivity which might elapse ere I again beheld Bianca or my home, I almost regretted that the ocean had not swallowed me up, immediate death appearing preferable to the sickening future I anticipated; hope deferred for years, promotion stopped, and prospects blighted, perhaps, for ever.

As I walked slowly forward, my feet were soon cut by the hard flinty road, which I pursued towards the town. But the appearance of a handsome little villa, in the centre of a lawn, standing by the wayside, changed my intentions; I did not hesitate to approach the house, deeming it safer to acquaint an Italian gentleman with my condition, than to proceed, with the chance of being captured by the quarter-guard of a French camp or cantonment.

Passing through an ornamental wicket, I approached the villa, which was surrounded by a paved terrace, enclosed by a stone balustrade; every window was dark, save one on the ground-floor, which appeared made to open like a folding door. In front of this, a flight of marble steps descended from the terrace, between two pedestals, on each of which reposed a sculptured lion. I stood before the window, between the crimson curtains of which the interior was revealed, and its decorations and

furniture were more splendid than the general aspect of the villa led me to expect.

An aged man, of a venerable, benign, and truly noble aspect, sat near an ebony table, on which he leant, intently reading by the light proceeding from the globe of a silver lamp. He wore a baretta of crimson velvet, adorned in front with a gold cross, and a cape and stockings of scarlet, peeped out from under an ample dressing-gown of faded brocade, which enveloped his person. A few thin silvery hairs escaped from beneath his cap, and they glittered in the lamp-light; his forehead was high and commanding, the curve of his lip was majestic, and there was an indescribable dignity in his whole aspect. His cheek and brow were pale; yet, at times, his eyes sparkled as brightly as those of an Italian girl, as he conned over an old and discoloured piece of parchment, to which various seals and coloured ribands were attached.

I know not what it was that agitated me at that moment, but there was something in the presence of that venerable stranger, which, as it were, drew me insensibly towards him; and all dread of acquainting him with my situation, and intrusting him with my liberty and safety, vanished. Once more, ere essaying, I looked steadily at him. He was replacing the charter in an iron safe, and had drawn forth another, to which a seal, like a pancake, was appended. The light flashed more fully on his features than it had done before; and, strange to say, they appeared to me like those of an old friend, or of one whom I had a dim recollection of having seen before: but *where*, I endeavoured in vain to recollect.

"O, my illustrious brother!" he exclaimed, "though thy gallant heart is mouldering at Frescati, thy memory will be cherished while chivalry and valour are respected among men!" He paused, and lay back in an arm-chair, when I could perceive that tears were running down his cheeks; but the deep emotion passed away, and he again resumed his reading. I then tapped gently on the casement, and lifting the latch, entered the apartment.

"Pardon this intrusion—be not alarmed, reverend signor."

He started; the paper fell from his hand; he closed the safe with precipitation, and grasping the gilded knobs

of his arm-chair, stared at me in astonishment. Certainly, my appearance was not very prepossessing; my old fighting-coat, which had long since acquired a purple hue by campaigning and the blood of wounds, had become of a most unique colour, by being drenched in salt-water. I was unshaven, grisly, and gaunt of visage; minus boots and hat, and my damp hair hung around my face in matted locks.

"A British officer in my presence, and at this time of night!" he exclaimed. "Whence come you, sir?" he added, surveying me with a proud, stern glance, which gradually melted into one more pleasant and benign. "Your name and purpose, signor?"

"Claude Dundas, a captain of the 62nd regiment, and aide-de-camp to General Sir John Stuart, now serving in the Calabrias."

"Stuart — *Stuart!*" he muttered, "the times are indeed changed when—you say your name is Dundas? Which family are you of?"

Though surprised at this question from an Italian lord, I satisfied him; he smiled, and said, "*I* know them."

"Illustrissimo, I have undergone great misery during the past storm in the Gulf of Tarento, and in this condition have been wrecked; I know not upon what part of the Italian shores I have been thrown, but trust to be received with that hospitality which I, as an officer of Italy's ally, have a right to expect."

"Welcome, signor; but excuse my rising. *I* never rise, but to equals. No Briton in distress ever sought succour from me in vain; yet little—little, truly, do these heretical islanders deserve favour at my hands! Ola, Catanio!"

He rang a silver hand-bell, and an attendant, or old priest, made his appearance, who exhibited the same aspect of dismay that his master had done on beholding me.

"With us, signor," said my host, "you are safe, although Massena's soldiers swarm everywhere around us. Here you can remain in disguise until we discover some means of sending you to Calabria."

"You speak my very wishes—I am deeply indebted to you! Upon what part of the coast have I been thrown?"

"Near Canne, in Basilicata, a few miles from the frontier of Upper Calabria."

"I am, then, in rear of the French lines at Cassano!" said I, aghast at the intelligence. He bowed.

"Follow Catanio; change your attire, and partake of some refreshment—go! afterwards I will speak with you." He had all the air and tone of a man who through life had been accustomed to wield authority.

"Basilicata!" I repeated inwardly, as we retired; it seemed almost incredible that the water-logged wreck, under a jury-foresail, even when aided by wind and tide, could have run so far up the gulf since daybreak. Her sailing must have averaged five knots an hour, since we lost sight of the Capo della Colonna. Catanio, who by his taciturnity and outward trim appeared to be a monk, led me into an ante-room, where he furnished me with dry apparel. I asked him numerous questions concerning my host, but he seemed very unwilling to gratify my curiosity.

"Signor Catanio," said I, while slipping on a pair of black cotton breeches, "I presume he is a man of rank."

"In Italy, none is nobler; the vicegerent of God excepted," he replied, energetically.

"You are an Abbruzzese, by your accent, I think?" The old fellow smiled sourly, and took a great pinch of snuff.

"I am an honest man," said he, handing his snuff-box to me, and bundling my wet uniform, somewhat contemptuously, into a chest, which he locked.

"And my host," I continued, thrusting on a black serge jacket, "he must be a churchman, as he is served by priests; how am I to address him?"

"Italians style him, 'his eminence;' but we, his faithful domestics and followers, ——"

"Eminence!—is he Cardinal Ruffo?"

"Ruffo, the apostate!" repeated the other, with such intense scorn, that I was undeceived.

"He is a cardinal, at all events; and I (unhappy pagan!) have been styling him plain signor. Excuse my laughing; but, faith! one feels so comfortable in these dry clothes, after the misery of—but what is this? I am not going to a masquerade!"

"It is our master's pleasure that you attire yourself

thus," said Catanio, handing me a cassock and three-flapped hat like his own; "it is your only safe disguise."

"It is just like a snug dressing-gown, after all," said I, donning the garment.

"You are a perfect monk, signor!" said the old man, smiling kindly; "but do not keep your head so erect; that is an old habit. Ah! there was a time—but here are your beads—tie the girdle thus. Bravo! you are a very monk."

"Snuff, grease, garlic, &c., excepted," I thought.

"I am happy to assist in saving a countryman from those false Frenchmen."

"A countryman—what! are you a Scotchman?"

"Born and bred, sir," said he, laying aside his Italian, and, with an effort, recalling the strong northern dialect of his boyhood. "I was called Duncan Catanach; and, in happier days, dwelt near Lochaber, in old Caledonia; which I would fain behold once more, before I die."

The eyes of the old man glistened, and we shook hands with all the brotherly warmth of heart with which Scot greets Scot in a foreign land.

"I rejoice to meet in this place a subject of old George III."

"I am no subject of his! the petty princes —"

"Ha! some follower of Watt, who was beheaded for treason—eh?"

"No!" he replied, proudly and sternly; "I follow no traitor—nor do I participate in treason!" At that moment, his master's bell rang loudly, and he hurriedly withdrew.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CARDINAL.

In a few minutes, he led me back to the presence of my host. A slight repast had been hastily laid for me in a snug little library, the walls of which were adorned with a few trophies of arms and portraits, some of them veiled by crimson curtains; but I was too much interested in the cold fowls, the sparkling wine, and other viands displayed on the snowy table-cloth, to bestow a thought upon anything else. On entering, I bowed profoundly to his eminence, who occupied a large gilt chair, cushioned with crimson velvet. Catanio seated himself at the table, to help me.

"Make yourself quite at home, signor," said my host, "and sup without ceremony; being lashed to a wreck for ten hours is enough to give any man an appetite; but excuse my not bearing you company. I have already supped, the hour is late, and I do not usually admit strangers to my table. Catanio, be attentive to our friend."

Catanach—or Catanio—filled my glass with glowing sherry; and long ere the speech of my host was finished, I had dissected the major part of an excellent fowl. My eye fell upon my figure reflected in a mirror opposite, and I could scarcely restrain my mirth: I was a perfect canon, save that a head of curly brown hair supplied the place of a shaven scalp.

"Truly, signor, you make an excellent friar," said the cardinal, who seemed to know what was passing in my mind; "and I doubt not, that were you to resign the sword and belt for the cross and cord, you might rise in our Catholic Church, as many of your countrymen from Douay have done. You must be aware," he continued, after a pause, "that while here, in rear of Massena and Regnier's lines, you run considerable risk of discovery, with the danger of suspicion as a spy. But the ruthless marshal never disturbs my household; and while with it you are safe. He regards me with respect: although his master's iron hand robbed me of the little that war, rebellion, and crime had left me; the poor remnant of the fairest patrimony in Europe."

"I am indebted to your eminence; it would be a death-blow to my hopes to be taken prisoner just now, and would quite play the devil with me!"

"A British frigate often comes up the gulf as far as Canne."

"Ah! the *Amphion*."

"I will send you off to her by a boat: to pass the French piquets at Cassano, is too dangerous a mode of escape. I wish to befriend you, signor, and would deplore —ah! I love the scarlet coat; for I, too, have worn it in my youth."

"A cardinal in a red coat! In our service, my lord?"

"No," he replied, coldly, while his eyes sparkled and his cheek flushed. "No; but when I commanded fifteen thousand French infantry at Dunkirk, in the service of my father, whose portrait is behind you."

From the incomprehensible speaker, I turned to the portrait, which was that of a dark and oval-featured cavalier, in a long wig, which flowed over his steel breast-plate and scarlet coat; his eyes possessed the same keen and proud expression which I beheld in those of the Italian.

"I presume, my lord, you have seen service?"

"None worth mentioning," he replied; and, after pausing a while, till Catanio had retired and the table was cleared, he thus continued:—"And you are a Scotsman? How I love to meet with one! Ah! capitano, the Scots were a loyal people once; but how changed since their rampant Presbyterian priesthood have moulded the nation to their purpose—the designing heretics! Oh, cunning clodpoles! I may live to mar you yet."

"You, eminenza?"

"I," he replied, his eyes sparkling again.

"You have been in Scotland, I presume?" I asked, with an air of pique.

"Never; but the name of that country finds an echo in my heart. Though born a Roman, the ideas of your people, their Lowland nobles, and the chiefs of the loyal and illustrious clans, are all well known to me. Dear to me, indeed, is every inch of the isle of Great Britain,—though, truly, I owe little to the land which set a price on the heads of my nearest and dearest relatives."

"Whom have I the honour of addressing?"

"*Your king!*" he replied, with a deep voice, which caused me to start, as he rose erect from his chair, and his tall and venerable figure seemed to dilate, and his faded cheek to glow. "Your king, sir," he added, in pure English; "one, at least, who should have been so, but the hands of time and fate are now laid heavily upon him. I am Henry the Second of Scotland and the Ninth of the sister kingdom—the cardinal duke of York,—now, alas! known as the last of the house of Stuart. Fate—fate—yes, hardly hast thou dealt with me! Expelled from Rome by Napoleon, robbed of my estates, and driven to penury in my old age, I dwell here in forgotten obscurity, subsisting on that poor pittance which is yearly doled out by the government of Britain. Yet let me not be ungrateful to George their king,—even that he might have withheld from me. A time may come—God hath given, and God can take away. You know me now, sir—let your wonder cease."

As if exhausted by this outburst of his troubled spirit, the venerable cardinal sank back in his chair, while I arose from mine in a very unpleasant state of astonishment, pleasure, and doubt: astonishment at the discovery, a joyous pleasure at beholding the aged and illustrious prelate (even then the secret idol of many a heart which clung to memories of the past), and doubt how to address him, having heard that he exacted the title of "Majesty," which it was as much as my commission was worth to yield him. But a spell was upon me. I had looked on kings at the head of armies, surrounded by their staff and courtiers, and, though banners were lowered, and cannon thundered in salute, to me they were just as other men; but in the air and aspect of the aged Henry Stuart, even in that humble apartment, and surrounded by no external grandeur, save that with which the mind invested him—with no insignia of royalty, save those with which inborn grace and majesty arrayed him, there was a nameless charm, a potent and mysterious influence, which quite bewildered me; and all the romance, the misfortune, the ten thousand stirring memories of the past,—so stirring, at least, to every thorough Scotsman,—rushed upon my mind like a torrent. It was a sensation of happiness, a gush of chivalric sentiment and honest veneration, which accompanied them. I bowed, with proper humility,

before the old cardinal-duke, whose proud, dark eyes sparkled again as he extended his hands above my head, and, forgetting his imaginary majesty in the churchman, bestowed on me a solemn Latin benediction.

"Wear this in memory of me." He threw around my neck a riband, to which a gold medal was attached; and, when the tumult of my spirits passed away, and I raised my head, he was gone. Catanio stood beside me.

"Has he not the air of a king?" he asked, while a bitter smile curled his thin lips, and lit up his sharp, grey eye. "You are afraid to answer. You are wearied, perhaps. His majesty has retired for the night: allow me to lead you to your apartment."

In the solitude of my chamber, I endeavoured to unravel the chaos of thought that whirled through my brain. The driving wreck, the drowning crew, and the terrors of the midnight storm—the white salt foam, the roaring sea, the cliffs up which I clambered—the villa, the cardinal-duke blessing me—all passed before me in rapid review. I drew forth the riband and medal, to examine them: the latter was of massive gold; it was one of those struck by order of the cardinal, on the death of his brother, Prince Charles, and distributed among his friends (who even then, as his papers afterwards revealed, were both powerful and numerous), in commemoration of his imaginary succession. It bore his head in bold relief, with the motto, "Henricus Nonus, Angliæ Rex." On the reverse was a cross, supported by Britannia and the Virgin; behind, rose a bridge and cathedral, with the crown of Britain. George III. became possessed of two of those singular medals, but, perhaps, I was the first of his officers who received one from the hand of York: I have preserved the gift, with proper reverence, in memory of an interview which I shall never forget.

Next morning, I was awakened by the familiar but unwelcome sound of drums beating. Dressing in my strange garb, and descending to the lawn, which lay around the mansion, I walked forth to enjoy a ramble in solitude. I looked on my shovel-hat, the serge sleeves and knotted girdle of my strange attire. Three days ago, I was aide-de-camp to the count of Maida, galloping along the line on a garrison parade; to-day, a monk, and a follower of Henry Stuart, the cardinal-duke of York!

The beauty of the scenery and freshness of the morning drew my steps towards Canne, which I beheld on the sea-shore, about two miles distant,—its white walls, church spire, and casements, gleaming in the rising sun. The sound of distant bells reminded me that it was Sunday. The morning was cloudless, the sky blue, the earth green, and glistening with dew; the wide Gulf of Tarento sparkled with light as it vanished into dimness and misty obscurity,—the horizontal line, where sea met sky, being only marked by some sail glittering, like a snow-wreath or white cloud, in the distance. The road was narrow, and, being bordered by thick copsewood, was cool and shady. I wandered on, until a turn unexpectedly brought me upon the parade of a regiment of French infantry, which had just been inspected by Massena, and was being formed into sections, preparatory to marching. My heart beat quick: discovery was death, and I shrank from the lynx-like gaze of the ferocious Massena, who, after a few words with the colonel, galloped off, accompanied by his aide. I began to breathe a little more freely. I recognized the 12th grenadiers, in their blue greatcoats and bear-skin caps, and at their head my old friend De Bourmont, as paunchy and merry as ever. An exchange of prisoners had taken place, and all that we had captured were once more in arms against us. The band struck up, the arms flashed, as they were sloped in the sun, and the battalion moved off, *en route* for the frontiers of Calabria, where Massena was concentrating his forces at the very time our troops were about to abandon the country. How bravely the sharp trumpet and the hoarse drums rang in the wooded way, as they marched through the green defiles! Whilst I listened, regardless of time and place, cassock and cope, some peasant-women approached, that I might bestow a benison on their children; they, however, received only very vague and curious answers, as I pushed past, and hurried back towards the good cardinal's villa, from which I had been too long absent.

After I had breakfasted hastily in my own apartment, Catanio informed me that, as his majesty was to celebrate high mass at Canne, as a piece of etiquette, it would be necessary for me to attend.

"Faith! I have entertained the natives enough for one day," said I. Catanio frowned; and, being obliged to consent, a mule was brought me, and I set off with the

household of the cardinal. A lumbering, old-fashioned coach bore his eminence from the villa, at a most solemn pace,—its little Roman horses appearing dwarfed to the size of ponies beside the ancient vehicle, on whose carved and gilded panels shone the crown and arms of Britain. The old man considered himself in everything a king,—and, doubtless, an excellent one he would have made, if we judge by the goodness of his heart, and the fidelity of his few and disinterested adherents.

That magic influence by which his family always gained the unbounded loyalty and most romantic attachment of their followers, he certainly possessed in no small degree: there was a nobility of soul, a quiet stateliness of demeanour, and a pious resignation to his obscure fate, which made his imaginary crown shine with greater lustre; and he passed through life more peacefully and happily, in consequence of taking no active part in the great question of hereditary right, which had embittered the days of his father and brother. His years, his rank, his reputed sanctity, and general amiability of character, procured him the admiration and devotion of the Italians, who were exasperated by the invasion of Rome, and the expulsion of so many ecclesiastics of rank. The crowd surrounding the porch of the church, uncovered, with reverence, as he descended from the coach, and followed by his household,—three old Scottish priests, an Irish valet, and myself,—ascended the steps of the church. On these, crowded a number of wretched mendicants,—a hideous mass of festering sores, ragged garments, black visages, and squalid misery; they fell upon their knees, and, when Catanio scattered some silver among them, there arose cries of—"Viva eminenza! O, the gracious lord! the beneficent father! Viva Enrico Stuardo! Viva la famiglia Stuardi!"

High mass, in its most impressive form, was celebrated by the cardinal. The congregation consisted of the people of Canne, a few ladies, fewer cavaliers, and a sprinkling of the French garrison. Though the church was not large, its ancient aisles and carved roof presented a noble specimen of the old Italian Gothic, exhibiting those striking extremes of light and shadow for which that style is remarkable. The strong blaze of the noon-day sun poured between the many mullions of its stained windows, slanting on the picturesque crowd, who stood or knelt around the columns—on the cavalier in his ample cloak,

the signora in her veil and mantle, the peasant in his rough jacket, and the graceful country girl, with her sparkling eyes and olive cheek, shaded by a modest muslin panno. Six tall candles glimmered before the dark altar-piece; while the altar itself, being covered with the richest carving and gilding, shone like a blaze of glory around the aged cardinal, who stood on the highest step.

The relics of several saints and martyrs, of great reputed sanctity, stood upon it; and an old ragged mantle, which hung from one of the columns, was said to be the cloak of Madonna, and to have cured divers disorders, by being wrapped round the sufferers.

My informant was a priest: while speaking, he glanced at Bianca's diamond ring, which sparkled on my finger, and the scrutinizing eye with which he regarded me, brought the blood to my temples. I was also exposed to the watchful glances of a French officer, in whom, to my horror, I recognized General Compere, whom I had met at Maida: some recollections of my face appeared to flash across his mind, and he stared at me with cool determination. Uneasy at the chance, the danger, and disgrace of discovery, I withdrew, by a side-door, into a little oratory, which adjoined the body of the church.

"Reverend father," said a man, advancing with a bunch of keys, "are you the Frà Sermonello, whom his eminence has deputed to visit the chapel of the penitents?"

"To be sure, fool! for what should I be here else?" I answered, gruffly, forgetting my assumed character in the annoyance I felt; but immediately adding, "of course, my son, I am come to visit these unfortunate devils—heretics, I mean."

"This way, then, Signor Canonico," said he, with an air which showed he had no great veneration for my sanctity.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE FIRST PENITENT—THE NUN.

"A CURSED scrape!" thought I, whilst following him through a little side-door of iron, which creaked on its rusty hinges, as it rolled slowly back, revealing a long passage, dark and mysterious as any in the pages of "Anne Radcliffe," and interrupted by flights of steps, where we required a lamp to aid us in descending. The black walls were covered with glistening slime, and reflected the flashes of the lamp, which flickered and almost expired, as it struggled with the noxious vapours floating through these dismal vaults, and I became chilled with cold as we descended. An iron grate or portcullis, which barred our way, was raised up in a sliding groove by my guide, who requested me to pass, and, saying he would await me there, gave me his lamp.

Many tales of the holy office, and of the bigoted ferocity of Italian monks, flashed on my remembrance. Perhaps I was in a snare! Doubtful whether to proceed, or knock the fellow down and regain the church, even at the risk of being discovered by General Compere, I stood for a moment irresolute; but I had no secret enemy there, and the cardinal was a powerful friend.

"Father," said my guide, "you are a stranger here?"

"I am in these vaults for the first time."

"They contain three penitents; first, a nun, who broke her vows, and lies sneezing and coughing in the cell just before you. Poor girl! she has been here three weeks, and likes her quarters no better than the first hour she saw them; maladetto! you may hear how she moans. Opposite, lies the cell of a mad cavalier, who is chained like a tiger—my lord bishop intends confining him here for life; and next his cell is that of a monk, sent hither for living too joyous a life—gaming and drinking with gay damsels, when he should have been snug in his dormitory."

"I have a project," said I; "leave me the keys. On my return, I will deposit them in the niche at the chapel door."

"That was old Frà Grasso's way," replied the keeper or warder, and, doffing his hat, withdrew.

"Now, were there a thousand prisoners here, I should set every one of them free!" I exclaimed, while hurrying along the passage, lamp in hand, execrating the cruelty of that tyrannical prelate, who confined three human beings in a place which I could not contemplate without a shudder. The low, narrow passage was arched by rough stone groins, springing from corbelled heads, hideous as those of demons, that projected from walls, through the joints of which the damp, reeking slime had been distilling for ages; innumerable stalactites hung long and pendent, like foul icicles; enormous fungi flourished luxuriantly on the sable masonry; large bloated toads croaked on the slippery floors; rats peeped forth from holes and corners, and the whistling bat flitted to and fro on the cold vapours of those dripping dungeons.

Before me lay the cell of the nun; intending to visit her first, I unlocked with great difficulty the oaken door, and entered. Accustomed to the gloom, I could survey the whole place at a glance; it was a dark, cold, and comfortless den, about sixteen feet square, and had a narrow, zigzag loop-hole opening high in the wall, which admitted little air and less light. Crouching upon a bundle of straw, in a corner of that detestable place, lay the poor nun, wasted and worn, pale and ghastly. Her eyes were raised to heaven; and though her lips moved not, she was praying, but in that still voice which God alone can hear. At the sound of my steps, she turned on me an apathetic stare, and her sunken eyes sparkled wildly between the long dishevelled masses of her raven hair, which wandered over her bare bosom and shoulders. She was almost destitute of covering, having, I believe, no other garment than a gown of black serge, which was torn in many places, revealing her pure white skin, that gleamed like alabaster through the gloom.

"Oh, pity, pity! for the gentle love of God!" she exclaimed; and added, with a shriek, "Ah! it is the bishop—again—again!"

Shuddering, she hid her face in her long hair, and began to weep as if her heart would burst. Approaching her, I laid my hand kindly on her soft shoulder, and said—

"Poor woman! be comforted; you are not entirely forsaken——"

"Begone!" she exclaimed, spitting upon me; "away, priests of hell, who murdered my love—my husband!

Away, lest I tear you with my teeth! Ha! ha! madness is coming fast upon me! Oh, joy, Jesu Christo! my brain begins to wander."

"Signora——"

"Preach on—of what? religion—and in this dungeon! —in which religion has consigned me to darkness, solitude, and horror. Oh! the soul-sinking misery I have endured these many, many weeks! My husband—who murdered him before my face?—A priest. Who would have dishonoured me?—A priest! Ha, away to your tyrant bishop! I will commune with God, without the medium of wretches such as thee!"

"Lady, I am no priest," I replied, deeply touched by her misery and piercing voice. "I am a soldier—a gentiluomo in disguise. Trust me, and you may yet escape, to be free and happy."

As I spoke, she rose from the floor, grasped my arm with convulsive energy, and gazed upon my face with a searching glance, as if she would read the inmost secrets of my breast; she passed her hand across my head and face, to assure herself my figure was not a vision; her whole arm was thus revealed, and, though attenuated, its purity was dazzling.

"Oh, signor! dear and good signor! oh, if you should deceive me!" she exclaimed, clinging to my hand, and weeping bitterly. "O, if you should be but some emissary from the accursed bishop! At times he comes, like an evil genius, to offer me freedom. Ah! canst thou guess its price? I will not go with thee—away! leave me!"

"Can there be greater misery than that which you now endure?"

"No, no; there cannot! Who can live without hope? yet all fled from me! Oh, my Luigi! hadst thou been living, I had not been forgotten, to perish thus! My sisters ——"

"Luigi!" I reiterated, while gently removing the dishevelled masses of silky hair which veiled her features—a cry burst from me! I beheld the belle of Palermo, the nun of Crotona, the sister of Bianca, who had been so cruelly carried off by the sbirri of this infamous Petronio of Cosenza. "Francesca!" I exclaimed; "Francesca of Alfieri, do you not remember *me?*"

She regarded me fixedly, pressed her hands upon her temples, and then shook her head mournfully.

"I am Claude Dundas—the friend of Santugo, and betrothed of your sister Bianca." I threw my arm around the poor bewildered girl, whom at that moment I loved with all the tenderness of a brother.

"The friend of Luigi! O, tell me if he yet lives? Tell me, though the answer should destroy me at the instant!"

"He lives, signora; but you alone can restore him to perfect happiness."

She raised her hands to heaven, and an exclamation of pious and fervent thankfulness died away on her lips; a bright blush for a moment shone on her wan, but alas! no longer beautiful cheek, and had not my arm supported her, she would have sunk on the pavement in a swoon. Without delaying a moment, I bore her away, and locking all the doors after me, deposited the keys in my pocket, instead of in the niche. The church was empty, and the cardinal gone. Leaving my charge for a moment in the recess of an old monument, I hurried to the porch; I reeled giddily as the full glory of noon blazed on my sight, so overpowering was the glare of light after the obscurity of the vaults. Hailing a passing calesso, I desired the driver to draw up near the door; on beholding Francesca, he scratched his unshaven chin, and appeared in an unpleasant state of doubt; but on my slipping a scudo into his hand, and desiring him to drive to the cardinal's villa, all his scruples vanished, and we drove off.

Great was the astonishment of the good cardinal, when I entered the lower saloon or drawing-room, leading the squalid apparition of poor Francesca, who was weakened by long confinement, and overcome with awe on finding herself in the presence of so high a dignitary of the church. She sank upon her knees, clasping my hand in hers, and not once daring to raise her timid eyes to the face of York, who had arisen on our entrance, and regarded us with a stare of silent wonder.

"Captain Dundas!" he exclaimed, in a tone which had something of sternness in it; "what am I to understand by this intrusion—and who is this woman?"

Francesca trembled violently; she would have spoken, but the words died away in whispers on her pallid lips.

"My lord—your eminence, pardon me! The case is urgent, and my meeting with this lady so unexpected, that, with your usual goodness, you will excuse my importunity, while I relate as briefly as possible her unhappy story; it

cannot fail to draw forth that gentle sympathy which no member of your illustrious house ever refused to the unfortunate."

This was graciously received; the old cardinal was as accessible to flattery as if he wore a crown; a pleasant smile spread over his features, and resuming his throne-like seat in the large gilt chair, he said, waving his hand,—

"Proceed, sir; I trust I have fallen not away from the ancient virtues of my ancestors. You know the old homely saying,

'A king's face
Should give grace:'

and here at least we are a king, and our subjects shall not sue in vain. Catanio, hand the lady a chair, and Captain Dundas will please to proceed."

I endeavoured to raise Francesca; but altogether overcome with a sense of her imaginary unworthiness, in a presence so august, she remained kneeling in painful humility, with downcast eyes and trembling limbs. I pressed her hand, to reassure her; and, recalling all her story, related it briefly, and in such a mode as I deemed would be most pleasing to the ear of the aged duke, and most likely to obtain his sympathy, which the unhappy never claimed in vain.

"De Bivona and my lord bishop did right," he replied, "in capturing this runaway; and the doom to which the latter consigned her, is only such as the laws of the most holy Catholic Church have from time immemorial directed for broken vows."

Francesca trembled more violently, and my heart sank; all hope seemed to die away, when the cardinal frowned on our cause.

"O, may it please your eminence to bend a favourable eye on this unhappy girl! You will confer a boon on the descendant of a family which of old was never wanting in loyalty to your house."

He remained buried in thought for a time.

"Captain Dundas," said he, "I will think over this matter; the bishop may have stretched rather too far that high authority with which the church invests her servants; but this unfortunate sister must return to a convent, and there remain, until her case has been duly considered. My order will assure her of the kindest treat-

ment. Catanio!" he rang his bell, and the factotum appeared.

Although Francesca regarded with invincible repugnance a return to a convent, where she would be subjected to the impertinent scrutiny of the sisterhood, and perhaps that of a severe superior, yet it was a joyful relief from the horrors she had endured; I led her away, in tears, and gave the cardinal those thanks which she was unable to articulate. He wrote a brief note to the abbess, which Catanio was to deliver. The calesso was at the door, and we drove off at true Neapolitan speed to the Cistercian convent at Canne.

We resigned Francesca to the superior, whom I was glad to find was a short and stout old lady, with double chin, two merry, twinkling eyes, and a visage which betokened the utmost good-nature. The poor girl wept as if her heart would burst, when we prepared to retire; but, on my obtaining permission to visit her often, she became more reconciled. I left the prison-like nunnery, feeling happy that I could thus befriend Santugo by protecting his Francesca, and restoring her to light and life: the whole affair had quite the air of a romance. Dismissing Catanio, I went to the shop of a locksmith, whom I desired to make three keys like those of the vaults, which were placed in his hand.

He bestowed an inquisitive glance at my curious monastic garb; but, on my displaying a few ducats, readily took an impression of the keys in wax; on receiving his promise that a new set should be in readiness next day, I hurried off and restored the originals to the niche where I had promised to deposit them.

I was overjoyed to find the venerable cardinal so much interested in Francesca's favour, that he forthwith despatched a courier to Rome, praying for her dispensation, which I then considered as certain, his influence with Pope Pius being so great, that a boon so trifling as loosening the vows of a nun could not be refused him. I knew not how to express my thanks; he was conferring as great a gift on me as on the visconte, and I contemplated with joy the happiness our return would diffuse at the Villa d'Alfieri, when I restored a bride to the arms of Luigi; while, in return, he——but let me not anticipate that, for fear of a disappointment.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A CHANCE OF ESCAPE LOST.

A WEEK slipped away; I visited Francesca every morning, and saw, with pleasure, the bloom returning to her faded cheek, and the lustre to her sunken eye; yet I spoke not of the dispensation, while there was the least chance of a miscarriage; knowing that she was too weak to stand many alternate shocks of grief and joy.

Notwithstanding the gracious manner and winning kindness and hospitality of the cardinal—who appeared to possess that charm hereditary in his family, by which he gained the hearts of all who knew him—I was impatient to deliver at Crotona the despatches with which I was intrusted; to fling aside the slovenly cassock, and don, once more, my smart uniform. I grew heartily tired of the disguise, when its novelty passed away; and bestowed many a most unpriestly malison on its ample skirt, when it impeded me in walking.

One evening, Catanio came to me in a hurry, saying "*his majesty* wished to see me without a moment's delay;" he was most scrupulously exact in styling him thus.

I found the cardinal seated on a lofty terrace, where he usually passed the evening, enjoying the beauty of the prospect and coolness of the air.

"Sir," said he, "a path is just opened for your escape, and you have an opportunity which may never occur again. The British ship I mentioned to you is again off the coast, and a boatman will take you on board after dusk. There are no French gun-boats in the gulf, therefore you can escape in perfect safety."

While he spoke, a frigate hove in sight: she was clearing a point of land, over which her topsails were glittering in the light of the setting sun, which was then gilding the glassy waters of the gulf, and reddening, with its last rays, the surrounding shore. It was the *Amphion;* her bellying canvas shone white as snow, as she rounded the promontory, and the evening wind unrolled the bright scarlet standard at her mizen peak; that standard which a Briton never hails with such joyous pride as when it waves in the breeze of a foreign clime. Gracefully the

beautiful frigate came on, with the white foam curling under her bows and rolling past her swelling sides, from which thirty-six pieces of cannon protruded through the port-holes; and we could discern the long flush line of her gun-deck crowded with men.

A smart American ship, which had probably been blown up the gulf by the late storm, passed at a short distance on the opposite tack, showing her stripes and stars. Scarcely had she cleared the *Amphion's* quarter, when a puff of white smoke curled from it, and a gun-shot whistled across her fore-foot, skimming the water beyond. The Americans immediately took this rough hint, and lowered their topsails to our flag—a good old custom of ocean homage, which of late years has been disused.

"For what reason has the frigate fired on the poor merchantman?" asked the cardinal.

I acquainted him with the ancient etiquette, by which Britain compelled the flags of foreign nations to do homage on her wide watery dominions; and a smile of gratified pride lighted up the glistening eyes of the listener.

The frigate would be close off Canne, when she crossed the gulf on the other tack; and the cardinal observed that Catanio would have a boat waiting on the beach after dusk. It was a tempting offer, and a most tantalizing sight to behold within musket-shot a British ship, for whose commander I had important despatches: but to abandon poor Francesca, when I was so anxious to convey her to a place of safety, and to present her in person to Luigi, was a project I could not relinquish. The cardinal read the expression of doubt which my face betrayed.

"Do you not wish to return to your friends and your duty?" he asked.

"Anxiously," I replied; "but not without the Signora d'Alfieri, whose dispensation you so graciously requested. Permit me to reside here a few days longer—at least, until it arrives—that I may convey this desolate girl to the arms of the only friends whom war and time have left her. You will thus confer another boon, which I shall long remember, though I never can repay."

"As you please, Captain Dundas. I shall be very happy if you reside with me so long as your duty and inclination will permit you. Happy, indeed! Seldom it is now that

an English tongue is heard among my diminished household; save when some Scottish priest from Douay, or some Highland gentleman, whom English interest and the change of manners have left uncorrupted, comes here to pay homage to the last of the Stuarts. Yet their presence brings more sorrow than pleasure; it raises up those airy visions which shipwrecked the happiness of my chivalric brother, and beseem me not to think upon now, in my helpless obscurity and very old age; creating a useless longing to behold that isle of which I have heard and thought so much, and which I fain would look upon before my eyes close in their last slumber, and I am laid in the tomb of my father at Frescati."

Thus the good cardinal continued for hours: there was a something in his tone and manner which touched me deeply. Could I listen to his words without sympathizing with fallen greatness, in the person of the last representative of our long line of kings?

The sun went down, crimsoning land and sea with a warm glow, as it sank behind the hills; the ocean changed from bright yellow to deep blue, the stars were shining in heaven, and the *Amphion* had diminished to a speck on the distant waters of Tarentum, before the cardinal ended his reminiscences and disjointed self-communings, and leaning on my arm, retired to his apartment. The frigate appeared no more; but after that evening I became doubly anxious to be gone, and waited with intense impatience the return of the courier, bringing from Rome the decree which would free Francesca, or seal her doom for ever.

Remembering the false keys made for me at Canne, I resolved, in my assumed character, to visit the cells of the penitents, and discover those who were worthy of liberty, and those who deserved to remain in durance vile. One dusky evening, I departed on this mission, with my duplicate keys and a dark lantern, and having my shovel-hat flapped over my face, to avoid observation. The night soon became dark; not a star was visible, and the wind howled through the battlements of the ancient church, and moaned in its hollow aisles. Had I been timid or superstitious, here was enough, in the horrible aspect of these vaulted chambers, to deter me from advancing; but in them day and night were almost alike.

I first opened the cell of the cavalier mentioned by the

guide, and on entering, awakened the occupant from a dreamy sleep—a man, although his features were hollowed by long confinement, want, and care; though his eyes were wild and his beard grizzled—the expression of whose face was as prepossessing and noble as his figure was commanding. He was tall and strong in person, but heavily fettered; and his garments were rags, which fluttered in the breeze that swept through his prison; he trembled with cold and debility. Poor man! a captivity of three long years had not inured him to the misery of the den to which the tyranny of a powerful persecutor had consigned him; his manacles clanked as he rose from the damp pavement, and a stern and scornful frown gathered on his haughty brow when he beheld me.

"Reverend signor," said he, waving his fettered hand, "you may spare me your usual exhortations, and begone; yet think not that I am so hardened as to scorn a Christian churchman. God forbid you should suppose so! but I have nothing to confess, save my abhorrence of these bonds and the foul tyranny which immures me here, in a living grave, from light and happiness; subjecting me to misery, under which, had not my own indomitable spirit supported me, reason must have given way. Leave me—begone!"

"Signor cavalier, speak less angrily; I am not what you take me for, but a friend, who comes to set you free. Remember, signor, that the British are the friends of Calabria, which our victorious army has already freed from the yoke of France."

"What is this you tell me?" he exclaimed. "British troops in Calabria! And what am I reserved to hear? Naples has again become a province of France! yet not a voice has whispered it to me in this living tomb, where I have been kept in ignorance of all those great events that have shaken my country. From France—again from the grasp of France?" said you.

"From the brother of Napoleon, whose soldiers we have driven from the rocks of Scylla to the hills of Cassano; hoisting the banner of Ferdinand on the towns and castles of the provinces, and gaining one most signal victory in a battle on the plains of Maida."

"I am thunderstruck! And all this has passed in three years?"

"In as many months."

"O joy! And you have come to set me free, most reverend father?"

"Yes,—but address me not thus; I am a British officer in disguise, and placed in a most peculiar position," I replied; quite forgetting the part I intended to act, in my sympathy for this unfortunate, whose frank and graceful bearing gained my entire good-will. "This bishop of Cosenza," I observed, "seems a tyrant, of whose cruelty and injustice I have heard innumerable instances."

"A tyrant, said you? Call him monster, fiend, or what you will; the flaming depths of hell contain not a darker spirit, a more designing devil! You offer me life; yet what is life to me now, when every flower that adorned my path in youth has been crushed and blighted, and every beam of joy extinguished, till gloom, horror, and revenge have settled like a shadow on my soul? O, signor! words cannot depict the bodily and spiritual agony I have endured. Ere we go, hear me, but a moment! My story is short, but bitter. Hear it, and pity me!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SECOND PENITENT—THE CAVALIER.

I AM the Cavaliere Paolo, of Casteluccio, one of the fairest patrimonies in Naples. No young man entered life with brighter prospects than mine, when, at the age of twenty, I found myself master of a handsome fortune and the love of Laura Molina, my fair cousin. I had been betrothed to her in infancy by my father, who, as her guardian, wished to keep her ducats in the family. When at college, the idea of being compelled to marry my little cousin was a source of continual vexation to me, and from very obstinacy made me prone to fall in love with every other girl. My marriage seemed the commencement of something terrible, and I saw with dismay the arrival of my twentieth birthday; when, throwing aside gown and tocque, and after spending a year amid the gaieties of Florence and Naples, I should have to demand my bride at the convent where she boarded.

"Per Baccho!" thought I; "if this repugnance is mutual, what a happy couple we shall be!"

On reaching the convent of St. Sabina, I found the inmates were hearing mass performed by Father Petronio, the great ecclesiastical orator of Cosenza. I entered the chapel in no pleasant mood, conning over the compliments which courtesy required should be paid to Laura, who I had been informed was the prettiest girl in a convent which was famous for its fashionable beauties.

"Ah! if Laura is like thee, young girl, what a happy rogue wilt thou be, Signor Paolo," thought I, as the veil of a young lady (who occupied a stool near a column against which I leaned) was blown aside, revealing to me a face of such mild and perfect beauty, that I became quite bewitched, and wished my unlucky cousin in the crater of Etna. Her complexion was extremely fair; her eyes blue and tender, and a quantity of light-brown hair fell curling around a face which had all that softness and bloom of feature one might imagine in a seraph. Enough! for the time, she banished all thoughts of Laura.

At last, Father Petronio made an end of his discourse, of which I had not heard a syllable. The people dispersed, and in the crowd of nuns, novices, and boarders, I lost sight of my fair unknown. I turned away with a sigh to visit this provoking cousin, whom I was bound, by my father's will, to espouse, or my ducats would every one be forfeited to the altar of Madonna.

I sent in my card to the abbess, and presented myself at the grate. The Signora Molina was called, and imagine my joy on discovering my betrothed to be the same fair girl whose beauty had impressed me so favourably at church. I conversed with her for an hour, kissed her hand respectfully, and withdrew, thinking myself a most fortunate fellow in being compelled to espouse so handsome a girl, whose fortune was almost equal to my own.

Petronio was the confessor at the convent, and officiated in the same capacity to all the beauties of Cosenza; the ladies would confess their peccadilloes to none other than this celebrated churchman, whose learning, talent, and supposed sanctity, made him the pride of the province: but he was a subtle fiend at heart, as my story will show. He was the confessor of Laura, and to him she confided all her little secrets, until for some cause she dismissed him, and preferred an aged and decrepit Basilian. I remonstrated, but she said there were reasons; adding,

with a sweet smile, that I must be her humble servant then, if I would have her obey me by-and-by.

I allowed her to please herself, and passed the time in alternately visiting the convent and my villa, which I was fitting up suitably for the reception of such a bride. The more we saw and knew of each other, the stronger our mutual love became; and often, hand in hand, have we blessed my good and provident father who betrothed us in our childhood.

One night, when returning from a *café*, where I had spent some hours joyously with my friend Captain Valerio, and a few of his brother officers, old fellow-students, all choice spirits and roisterers, with whom I had a farewell supper, I had a singular encounter.

It was a lovely Italian night; the brilliancy of the pale moon eclipsed the light of the stars, which disappeared as she rose in her silver glory above the Apennines, and poured her lustre on Cosenza's seven hills—on its steep and lofty streets, and on the round towers of its hoary castello, where Alaric the Goth gave up his soul to God—whilst their giant shadows fell, frowning and dark, on the shining waters of the Bussiento and the Cratis. Midnight tolled from the steeple of Sabina, and the most profound repose pervaded the moonlit city. I gazed on the towering hills, on the wild and ample forest—which in the days of the Brutti extended to the promontory of Rhegium, but is now shrunk to the wood of La Syla—where the wood-cutter and carbonari have replaced the nymphs and satyrs of the ancients; I looked towards the distant sea sparkling in the moonlight, as its waves rolled round the Campo di Mare, and everything slept in silence, beauty, and repose: I was disposed for meditation and reverie—I thought of Laura, and my heart beat happily.

"In three days," thought I, "I shall be married——"

"To Laura Molina," said a voice near me.

I started: some one had spoken, but not to me. I was near the portal of St. Sabina, and looked inquiringly at the stone figure of Bruno of Cologne—could it have addressed me? No one appeared; I paused and listened.

"And this girl is beautiful, say you?" asked a voice.

"Lancelloti, thou canst not conceive such loveliness."

"I would compliment your taste, signor, could I but find you," I muttered, grasping my poniard.

"Again I say, Lancelloti——"

"Sword of Omar! you forget; my name is Osman Carora," replied the second speaker. "I am a respectable Mahomedan. Corpo di Baccho! I swear by turban and beard,—yea, by Mahomet!——"

"Silence, fool! and hear me whisper."

"Either Petronio spoke just now, or Satan himself!" thought I, looking cautiously about me; having a laudable curiosity to discover those good people who took such an interest in my affairs. I retired within the deep portal at the moment that two men stood before it in the full blaze of the moonlight, and I could distinctly hear all that passed. One was a short, squat, villanous-looking fellow, whose red vest, yellow trousers, turban, brass pistols, and sabre, declared him to be an Italian renegade, acting under the Algerine flag in the double capacity of pirate and smuggler. The other was the immaculate Petronio, whose breast was the repository of half the female secrets in the city—Petronio, the paragon of Cosenza,—the man of holiness, and of God!

"I tell you again and again, Lancelloti, Carora, or whatever you call yourself," he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper, "that I love this girl fondly; yea, madly; and shall I behold her given up to this chit-face cavalier, and without a struggle?"

"Of course not," replied the other, stroking his beard, while his imperturbable gravity formed a strong contrast to the whirlwind of passion which racked the bosom of the monk.

"For two years I was her confessor. O! the rapture I have felt in her presence. The exceeding beauty of that young girl has cast a spell upon me; I am no longer myself, the cold-hearted and calm-visaged monk, but a jealous and amorous lover. Curse on this robe! which excites only awe and gloom in the hearts of the young and beautiful. When, at confession, she knelt before me, was it not rapture to obtain those glimpses of her soft and snowy bosom?"

"Ay, truly, it was," responded he of the turban and slippers impatiently.

"To look on those bright blue eyes, and the stray golden curls that shaded the dimpled cheek, to feel those beautiful hands clasped on my knee in prayer, though I

dared not touch them. Never before did such a fairy being cross the path of a priest, to wean him from his God, and destroy his peace for ever."

"No, indeed, no; Sacramento! come to anchor, will you? The moon is on the wane; La Syla is growing dark, the land-breeze is coming, and the *Crescent* lies close to, under the Campo di Mare, with jib and foresail loose; I must sail by daybreak, if I would keep clear of the British fleet, which my prince of crookbacks, Gaspare Truffi, says stood down the Straits of Messina last evening."

"Right before the wind, with studding-sails and royals," said a hideous hunchback, whom I had not before observed, "and if this breeze continues——"

"Peace, imp of darkness! and sheer off," said the pirate, grasping a pistol.

The hunchback growled, and withdrew.

"Prythee, make an end, Petronio, and say for what purpose you have brought my handsome shipmate and me hither. A priest in love is——bah! in time you will tire of this baby-faced girl."

"Tire!" exclaimed the priest—

> "O, no!
> I ne'er shall tire of the unwearying flame.
> But I am weary, kind and cruel dame,
> With tears that uselessly and ceaseless flow.
> Scorning myself, and scorned by you, I long
> For death!——"

"Pshaw! you are mad," cried the pirate, with angry impatience; "quoting the sonnets of Petrarch like a day-dreaming student. when you should act like a man of mettle. Here I am, at your service, mine ancient friend and gossip,—Frà Lancelloti once, now Osman Carora, of the brave xebecque *Crescent*, in the service of his sublime puissance the bey of Tripoli. Thou seest that, while at the summit of my oriental dignity, I have not forgotten thee; but speak to the purpose. That d——d British fleet—quick—thy project——"

"Is—but come this way." They moved forward; I paused for a moment, rooted to the spot by astonishment; and when I darted from the shadow of the porch, lo! they were gone; nor priest nor pirate could I see, though the bright moonlight still shone in full splendour on the tall windows and marble columns of St. Sabina. The *project*

—the very essence of the matter—I had not yet learned. O, diavolo! On every side I searched, but saw them no more; and, with a heart full of anger and apprehension, I returned to my temporary residence in the city.

"And this is the sainted Petronio," I exclaimed; "in love with my Laura, and leaguing with pirates to rob me of her—curse on his presumptuous soul! The podestà shall hear of what this night has revealed, and he shall drag forth to justice this wolf in sheep's clothing." But recollecting that my single assertion could not pull down the mighty fabric of Petronio's fame, I resolved to be calm, and watch narrowly: three days more would see Laura in my arms, when I might laugh at the friar, his passion, and his projects.

Fool that I was, to be outwitted by a villanous monk after such a warning! Laura's dismissal of her sanctified confessor was sufficiently accounted for: a dubious glance or word had, doubtless, offended her delicate sensibility, and his visits had been dispensed with for ever.

A thousand lights burned in the villa of Casteluccio, tinting with a ruddy glow the sea and the rocks of Campo di Mare, around which the waves rolled, sparkling like diamonds. Hangings of satin fringed with gold; festoons of fragrant flowers, gilded statues, and vases of alabaster; ceilings of fresco, columns of marble, floors of mosaic, and pyramids of party-coloured lamps, had turned my villa into a fairy palace. Every hall and chamber was gleaming with light, and crowded with beauty and gaiety; while the band of the Italian Guards played divinely in the saloon. The soft music floated along the echoing roofs, and all were joyous and happy. It was our marriage night. The *fête* was superb: six weeks before, the invitations had been issued, and all of any note in the province were invited. The fountains flowed with wine; and the pillared hall was crowded with dancers, who whirled in the airy waltz, or threaded the graceful quadrille. Nor did less joy reign without, where, on the green lawn, lighted less by the summer moon than by the countless variegated lamps which covered the walls of the villa and the trees around it, the young *paesani* danced the gay tarantella to the tabor and guitar.

I was waltzing with the duchess of Bagnara, one of the most famed of our Neapolitan beauties; but I saw only my Laura, who, attired in her white bridal robe, shone

among our loveliest women like a planet amongst the stars. How shall I describe her? Oh, for the power of Petrarch, and the same glowing words with which he described *the* Laura of Avignon! Not less beautiful was mine, as she shone in all her blushing loveliness; her bright hair waving around her, and her blue eyes sparkling with happiness and love. The duchess, a stately woman, with diamonds gleaming among her raven locks, was managing her train with inimitable grace, and rallying me severely on my want of gallantry, and inattention to her, when the report of a pistol was heard, and shrieks of women followed. The dance stopped, the ladies turned pale, eyes met in wonder, the music died away, and all listened in surprise, which soon gave place to terror.

Headed by a tall and powerful ruffian, in whom, notwithstanding his eastern garb, I recognized Father Petronio, a band of armed Algerines rushed among the dancers with pistol, pike, and scimitar. Defenceless as I was, I sprang to the side of Laura; my brave friend, the young Santugo, interposed with his drawn sword; but he was struck to the earth by Petronio's pistol, the ball of which wounded the fair duchess, who stood near him.

"Miscreant monk!" I exclaimed; but was beaten down, senseless: the last I remember was, beholding Laura struggling in the arms of the piratical priest.

When I returned to this world of misery, I found myself many leagues away at sea, chained to the deck of the renegade's ship, the *Crescent*, which stood towards the African coast; and, favoured by the land-breeze, was then leaving the Sicilian shores behind. Through an open port, I saw the last headland fading in the distance. The deck was strewn with the plunder of my villa; but I thanked heaven that my friends had been left, and that I alone had been carried into slavery. Laura!—had she escaped, or was she too in the hands of barbarians—a slave, exposed to every indignity and horror? I trembled—my heart sickened; I gnashed my teeth, and sank upon the deck in a stupor, caused by rage and disappointment, mingled with love and fear for Laura.

From this state I was roused, by being dragged along the deck by the villanous Carora, who flung me, while heavily ironed and unable to resist, down the companion-ladder with such force, that I lay stunned and motionless. Oh, misery of miseries!—in the cabin of the pirate was

Laura Molina—the girl whom but yesterday I had so joyously and solemnly espoused at the altar of St. Sabina —whom I had sworn to love for ever,—struggling in the strong grasp of Petronio.

She yet wore her bridal dress; but her bloom, her jewels, and wreath were gone. A stranger could not have recognized the blushing bride of yesterday, in the pale but beautiful phantom of to-day! I would have rushed to embrace her, but Carora held my fetters.

"Paolo!—my husband!—save me! save me!" she cried, wildly, stretching her arms towards me.

"Laura, to God alone——"

"Peace!" exclaimed Petronio, grasping a pistol. "Laura Molina, accept of my love, or I will blow the brains of your cavalier against the bulkhead!"

"Thy love!—O, horror!" she raised her eyes to heaven.

"Woman! I am not in a humour for trifling. On the wide ocean, far from aid, you are completely in my power, and must address your supplications to me; for, I tell you, not even heaven above, nor hell below the waters, can save you from me now! Decide—your Paolo, or me? A word may save him, or a word destroy!"

Levelling a pistol, he seemed more like a fiend than a human being: passion rendered his accents hoarse, and his visage black; his bulky frame seemed to dilate, and his breast to pant, while his eyes glared beneath their shaggy brows; and the knotted locks that fringed his shaven scalp twisted like the vipers of Lugano. His right hand was on the pistol-lock—his left grasped the shrinking form of Laura.

"Signora!" he exclaimed, in a fierce, fond whisper, "think of the bright fortune I can offer thee in the sunny land of the Algerine!"

"Holy Madonna, instruct me what to do in this hour of agony!" prayed the unhappy girl, whose excessive misery would have melted any heart, save that of the apostate. "O, my Paolo—thou,—every hair of whose head is more dear to me than my own life, what can I say to save thee?"

"Loved one! bid death welcome, and defy fear; but forget not that you are the wedded wife of a Neapolitan cavalier!"

"Farewell, dearest, Laura will soon follow thee."

"Thou wilt have, me, then?" exclaimed Petronio, with fierce triumph.

"Never!" replied Laura, faintly, as she swooned and sank senseless in his arms.

"Then away to Satan, thou!" cried the priest, as he fired at my head; but at that moment the pirate Lancelloti (or Carora), renegade and ruffian as he was — touched by one of those qualms of conscience which at times trouble even the most hardened villains, or perhaps, moved to pity by the exceeding beauty and agony of Laura— struck up the weapon, and the ball passed through the deck above. The priest turned furiously upon his partner in crime; but the distant report of a cannon, and the cry of "a sail on the weather beam," diverted their mutual anger for the time.

Confused by the explosion of the pistol, I was dragged back to the ring-bolt on deck, where I remained, helplessly, during all the horrors of the battle which ensued. Laura—it was the last I beheld of her—the last! O, Madonna mia! and Thou, whose power enabled me to survive such an accumulation of woe, teach me how, at this distance of time, to look upon the events of that day with resignation and calmness!

The corsair had fallen in with a Maltese corvette of twenty guns, bearing a knight-commander's pennon at the foremast head. She proved to be the *Gierusalemme*, commanded by the brave Calabrian, Marco of Castelermo; and an engagement being unavoidable, the corsair, which had an equal number of guns, prepared for action. Five hundred of the greatest villains under the sun stood to quarters: the ports were hauled up, the guns double-shotted, the tackles laid across the deck, while round-shot, wadding, grape, and canister lay between them in profusion. The crimson flag of Algeria was displayed from the mizen peak. The renegade seemed in his glory, and swaggered about with scimitar and speaking-trumpet; while the once meek and holy Petronio, with a cutlass and priming-box buckled to his waist, officiated as captain of a gun; and Truffi, the hunchback, crawled like a gigantic toad about the deck, bearing an immense basket filled with shot-plugs and oakum.

Thus prepared, the Algerines awaited the attack of the corvette, for whose success I prayed with the holiest fervour.

On came the *Gierusalemme*, the water flashing under her bows, and her taut canvas shining like snow in the noonday sun: both vessels as they neared shortened sail. The first cannon-ball passed close to my ear; and, stupified by its wind, I grovelled on the deck in despair. The corsair, after failing to weather her adversary, steered under her lee.

"Base infidels, surrender or sink!" cried a voice from the corvette, as we crossed on opposite tacks.

"To the tyrant knights of Malta!" bellowed Lancelloti, through his trumpet; "to become their slaves! Bah! Never, while the great deep can hide us, and we can throw a match in the magazine!" After a good deal of skilful manœuvring, the action commenced in stern earnest.

The pirates fought like demons; for slavery or death was their fate if vanquished: but the Christians opposed them with coolness and bravery. The heavy metal of the latter battered to wreck and ruin the bulwarks of the former,—dismantling their guns, and heaping the deck with dead, whom they were soon compelled to throw overboard to clear the way. The enormous fifty-pound balls of the corvette's forecastle-piece, created a devastation, to behold which made my heart leap with joy. The corsair was evidently getting the worst of the battle; her deck was torn up and ploughed in a thousand places, and the white splinters flew around in incessant showers: her sails were blown to rags, her standing and running rigging hung all in bights and loops, useless and disordered; while the blessed banner, the taper masts, and taut cordage of the *Gierusalemme* towered above the dense smoke in as perfect order as when the engagement began.

During this yard-arm contest, my situation was horrible. I was ironed helplessly to the deck, amid all its fury, and was, consequently, unable to fight or fly, to save Laura or myself. Ah! how I trembled, lest the missiles of the Maltese might penetrate the place of her confinement. Incessantly they were crashing around me, tearing up the strong planks, dashing boats and booms to fragments, and scattering brains and blood on every side. The slippery deck was flooded with the red current, which gushed from the lee-scuppers. I was suffocating beneath the corpses which fell continually above me, and shrieked and struggled under the ghastly load; but the ring-bolts were im-

moveable, and my cries were unheeded amid that frightful din. On all sides rang the curses, threats, and cheers of the living, the groans of the dying, the clanking of blocks and handspikes, the rattle of chains, and stamping of feet, mingled with the creaking and jarring of the guns as they were worked on deck, hauled back by their tackles, loaded and urged again to port, and then burst the deafening roar; while the small-arms from forecastle, poop, and tops, made up a medley of horrors! Riddled below and wrecked aloft, the corsair lay like a log on the water, and the fire of her guns died away.

La Gierusalemme forged ahead and lay across her bows, which the Maltese grappled fast, and the brave cavalier who commanded leaped upon her bowsprit at the head of his boarders. A yell burst from the pirates as the red flag of *death* floated from the *Gierusalemme*, whose guns, crammed to the muzzle with round shot and grape, were once more poured into her; the tremendous fury of the broadside, sweeping through from stem to stern, killed one-half of her fighting men, and struck consternation to the souls of the rest.

The moment of deliverance was at hand. On came the boarders like a torrent, when a cry of "fire!" arrested the faculties of all, and Petronio, the demon-monk, leaped up the hatchway with a flaming match; he had fired the ship.

"Throw her off—cut the grapplings—man the main-deck guns—fill the fore-yard! Bravissimo, St. John for Malta!" cried Castelermo, as his boarders scrambled back to the corvette, and their foes fought like fiends at the grapnels, that all might perish together. But the Maltese passed from their reach, backed their mainyard, and once more their broadside belched forth destruction on the sinking *Crescent*. Three hours had the combat lasted; the setting sun was now gilding the Tunisian hills and the isle of Giamour.

The corsair was soon enveloped in a cloud of murky vapour, which rolled away to leeward, and Lancelloti, after throwing all his wounded overboard, prepared to abandon the wreck. Concealed by the smoke, the crew crowded into their remaining boats and fled.

O, signor, imagine my situation then! Laura—if she yet lived—and myself, were alone in the corsair, which reeled every instant as the heavy shot of the corvette

pierced her. I heard a shriek from the cabin: another, it died away; O, frightful! The corsair was now a mass of flame. I might have saved Laura had I been free, but ironed hand and foot to the accursed deck—a victim, helpless as herself—I could only rave and pray, until exhausted by the terrible emotions which rung my soul, and half-stifled by the heat and smoke, I lay motionless in a state of stupefaction and misery.

As from an ocean hell, the hot flames burst through every hatch and port; all became red around me—my heart panted, my eyes were bursting in their sockets. I saw the masts and yards blazing and rocking above me; I heard the "vivas" of the Maltese, and the report of the corsair's guns exploding, as they successively became heated by the roaring and scorching flame.

"Now—I am gone—I am dying—God receive me!" The deck yielded beneath, and I expected to sink to the bottom of the flaming hold; but my fate was changed. At that moment the magazine blew up—a whirlwind of sparks burst on every side, the crackling deck parted beneath me, and I found myself struggling in the ocean; the coarsair sank, hissing and roaring, and nearly drawing into her vortex the planks to which I was chained. The bitter briny water rushed in at every pore, and I became insensible.

On recovering, I found myself upon the deck of the corvette, from whose commander I received every kindness and attention that the brave can yield to the unfortunate; but I was filled with an agony of horror when I reflected on the past, and the fate of Laura Molina.

Time softened those pangs, and remembering that she was with the angels in heaven, and happier than she could ever have been on earth, I became contented; but vowed never to love another!—a solemn pledge of love and piety, which I have most religiously preserved. To be brief—I served with the Cavalier di Castelermo during the remainder of his cruise against the Algerines, with whom we had many encounters; and the desire of avenging my wrongs endued me with the valour of a lion.

After the blockade of Valetta, when all hope of restoring the order of St. John to its pristine splendour had failed, Castelermo and I set out for Italy, to join the grand-master at Genoa. During the voyage the vessel anchored off the Campo di Mare, and I was seized with a longing to behold

my native city, and visit once more those places which the associations of childhood and love have rendered so dear to me.

On hearing that so distinguished a cavalier, with his his train, was in the vicinity, the bishop of Cosenza invited us all to his palace. It was one of our glorious Italian days; the landscape danced joyously in the sunbeams, the green peaks of the Syla, the spires of the city, the winding river, the waving woods, and the distant sea, all shone in summer beauty beneath the bright blue sky.

The memory of Laura, her beauty, her gentle innocence, our love and our misery, made my heart alternately a prey to the tenderest sorrow, and the fiercest longings to requite her wrongs upon the wretch Petronio.

It was the levee-day of the bishop; a guard of mounted sbirri received us in the porch of his palace. A crowd of richly-dressed cavaliers, officers, and knights of military orders, mingling with churchmen, thronged the ante-rooms, and were introduced, in turn, by the chamberlain. Entering the presence-chamber of the great prelate, I beheld him seated in a lofty chair, wearing his canonicals and sparkling mitre, gleaming with jewels and embroidery. On my nearer approach, judge of my sensations on recognizing, in his stern and sallow visage, the accursed lineaments of Father Petronio. The blood rushed tumultuously on my heart, and all the long slumbering spirit of the devil arose within me.

"Gesu Christo!" I exclaimed, raising my hands to Heaven; "is this one of Thy servants—Thy chosen servants?"

Castelermo arose from his knees in astonishment, while I unsheathed my sword and sprang upon the bishop, alike regardless of his power, his friends, and my life; I trembled, I panted, I thought only of Laura and retribution.

"Hypocritical apostate!" I exclaimed, grasping him by the throat, and dashing his mitre to the earth. "Thou pest of hell! thou murderer of my wife, and wrecker of my peace! have we met at last—ha!"

"Sacrilege!" cried the strangling bishop. "O, gentlemen and cavaliers, save me from this madman!"

"Madman! ha—peace, thou wolf in sheep's clothing! I am Paolo of Casteluccio, and too well thou knowest me; but die, fiend, die!" The strong hand of my friend grasped my descending sword, and the life of the dog

bishop was spared, although I dashed him to the floor with such force that he lay stunned and senseless.

I laughed with fierce exultation, and strove to trample him to death, but was grasped by a hundred hands. All the smothered fury of years had broken forth, and, imagining I had the strength of a Goliath, I thought to burst, like cobwebs, the fetters which were heaped upon me. I was mad—a maniac, and, knowing that I was so, rejoiced when men, who were valiant and strong, quailed before the demon-glare of my eye. The crowded chamber, the gleaming swords, the halberts of the sbirri, the prostrate bishop, and the uproar of tongues, are yet before me, like a dream of yesterday: I remember no more.

When the passion-fit passed away and reason returned, I was here in fetters, amid gloom and woe. Three summers have come and gone since last I saw the sun. * * * O, signor, all hope of life and liberty had faded away, and your presence alone has revived a love of existence, and a wish to look on the beautiful world once more—on its blue skies and green hills, ere death closes these eyes for ever.

The cavalier concluded just as my lamp was about to expire, and the grey dawn was peeping through the little iron grating which lighted his dismal vault. I gave the unfortunate man my hand, and, leading him forth, struck off his rusty fetters with a stone I found near the chapel door. No pen can describe his joy on finding himself free, and breathing the pure air of the summer morning. The sun was rising in all its beauty above the dark-green ridge of the distant hills; for three years he had not beheld it; he wept with joy, and, embracing me, declared, with the enthusiasm of his nation, that his life was at my service.

"O, signor! never, since I stood by Laura's side at the altar, have I felt a happiness equal to that which animates me now!"

His eyes sparkled with joy, and his haggard cheek flushed. He appeared about thirty years of age, and, but for his tattered garments and matted hair and beard, his features and figure would have been eminently striking and noble. Reminding him that instant flight was necessary, I advised him to join the chivalric Francatripa, with whom he would be safer than in any Italian city. He relished the proposal, as many men of birth and education

did not disdain to serve against France under such a leader.

We parted. Catanio was tolling the bell for matins, at the villa, when I returned, and, gaining my room unobserved, threw myself on a couch, and slept till noon. I then joined the old cardinal in his daily promenade, under the cool arcades, on the seaward side of his residence.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE THIRD PENITENT—THE MONK.

The escape of a second victim from the vaults caused a great surmising and anxiety at Canne; and although, no doubt, the cardinal suspected that I had a hand in the matter, he never spoke of it. The astonishment of the keeper was boundless, when he discovered his charge vanishing so unaccountably; he was accused of conspiracy, and imprisoned by order of the podestà. The poor man defended himself before the tribunal, by laying the blame upon—whom think you, gentle reader?—Virgil; who is regarded by the lower order of Italians less as a poet, than as a conjurer and magician, upon whose guilty head the blame of everything wicked and wonderful is laid.

Among the mountains, he has for ages been deemed the architect of every devilish contrivance, every fathomless cavern, splendid crag, fantastic rock, and ruined tower. A long dispute ensued between two learned lawyers, concerning the question whether it might or might not have been Virgil; and the decision was given for the prisoner, on the testimony of the chiavaro, or smith, who declared that a venerable man, with a white beard, meagre aspect, and eyes like living coals, had ordered a set of keys like those produced in court, for which he paid in strange and antique coin; and when he (the chiavaro) looked for them next day, they had vanished from his pouch, showing plainly that they were coins of hell. All present crossed themselves, and the keeper was immediately set at liberty, and restored to his dignity and bunch of keys.

Of the Cavalier Paolo, I had intelligence before leaving Canne. Gathering together a band of those bold spirits who infested the wilds of the Brettian forest, he fired the

palace of his foe, the bishop, who narrowly escaped with a severe bullet-wound, of which he soon after died. For this outrage, Casteluccio had to pay many a bright ducat to the altars of mother church, before he was permitted to resume his place in society, and it was not until the death of Murat that he obtained peaceable possession of his patrimony at Cosenza.

Several days elapsed without the appearance of the Roman courier, and I became very impatient to rejoin my regiment. Notwithstanding the risk of discovery, prompted equally by curiosity and humanity, I made a last visit to those frightful vaults, to free the remaining captive.

The stillness of midnight was around me when I entered, but a noisy singing rang through the echoing cells; the measure was a boisterous sailor's carol, such as I had often heard the fishermen singing, as they sat mending their nets on the shore of Messina.

I beheld in the third captive, an Italian, about forty years of age, possessing a powerful and savage aspect, strongly chained to a large stone, which served him for a chair and table, while a pile of straw between it and the wall formed his bed. He was flourishing his arms and snapping his fingers whilst he sang, but ceased on my entrance, and regarded me with a sullen stare of surprise. A large leathern flask, which stood on the stone near him, explained the cause of his merriment.

"Ha! thou cursed owl, that pokest about in the night, what seek you here, when you should be snug in the dormitory? Up helm and away, black devil! there's no girl here to confess—no one but Lancelloti of Friuli, a born imp of Etna, who will break every bone in your hypocritical body, if it comes within reach of his grapnels!"

"The pirate—the companion of Petronio!" I exclaimed; "are you that Lancelloti of whom I have heard so much? Astonishing!"

"Ho! ho! what are you talking about?" asked the captive, rolling his great head about. "I tell you, signor Canonico, that I am Osman Carora, a jovial monk of Friuli—(what am I saying?) yes, Friuli—would I was there again! Never have I seen a prospect equal to the fair Carinthian mountains, and the deep rocky dales through which the Isonza sweeps on to the Gulf of Trieste. It was my hap to look for many a dreary day through the iron bars of my dormitory on that gulf, and

afterwards to sail, with royals and sky-sails set, every rope a-taunto, and the red flag of Mahomet flying at the fore-mast head. Accursed bishop! I may revenge me yet, if the good friend who brings me this jolly flask every night proves true. Ah, Truffi, though crooked in form and cross in spirit, thou art an angel of light to me!"

"Truffi!" said I; "mean you Gaspare?"

The renegade, moved alternately by brutality, rage, and maudlin sentimentality, burst into a shout of drunken laughter.

"You know him—ha! ha! and are a jolly priest, after all. Alla akbar! instead of a prying monkish spy, I find you a comrade. Thou, who knowest Gaspare, must doubtless have heard of me. He is now in Canne, planning my escape from this cursed cockpit, to which the double-dyed villany of Petronio has consigned me. Gaspare was my stanch gossip in the cloisters of Friuli, and my master-at-arms and factotum on board the *Crescent;* his ingenuity alone saved me when I had nearly fallen into the clutches of the grand bailiff, for slaying the Capitano Batello. Fi! the recollection of that adventure haunts me yet; the glazing eyes, the clenched teeth, the pale visage, and the gleaming sword; the silver hairs, and the old man's blood streaming on the white dress and whiter bosom of his daughter! O, cursed flask!" said the ruffian, pausing to squeeze the leathern bottle. "May every monk and mollah anathematize thee in the name of Christ and Mahomet, for thou art now empty, useless, and upon thy vacuity I cry anathema! Beautiful wert thou indeed, Paula Batello, and too pure a being for such a serpent as Lancelloti to behold!"

"Caro signor, I would gladly hear her story."

"And so thou shalt; firstly, because thou are a comrade of our Apollo with the hump; secondly, because I would like to hear thy opinion upon it; and, thirdly, because I love to have some one to talk to in this blasted vault, whose walls I would that Satan rent asunder and ruined for ever." And, without further preface, he commenced the following story, which deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE MONK'S STORY.

THE Capitano Batello was an old soldier of the Venetian republic, who, after an active life, retired to spend the winter of his days among the woody solitudes of Friuli. All the village loved the good old capitano, who made wooden swords and flags for the children, and retailed his campaigns and adventures a thousand times to the frequenters of the cantina, where he was the military and political oracle; and at mass, all made way for the white-haired old man, when he came slowly marching up the aisle, with the Signorina Paula leaning on his arm. The old soldier's doublet was perhaps a little threadbare, or his broad hat glazed at the edge; yet he never forgot his rank, even when struggling for existence with half a ducatoon a day.

But Paula, the gentle-voiced, the blue-eyed and fair-haired Paula, was the admiration of all—the glory of the village; and the old captain watched her as a miser would a precious jewel. Beard of Ali! she would have brought a princely sum at Algiers.

She was beautiful, and her soft blue eyes looked one fully and searchingly in the face, with all the confidence of perfect innocence. Her mother was gone to heaven, as the captain said, when he engaged me as tutor to Paula and her brother, an office for which I received a trifle, that went into the treasury of San Baldassare—a trap which swallowed everything. The boy, Rosario, was a chubby little rogue, and for a time I took pleasure in hearing their lisping accents, as they conned over their task in an arbour which Paula's hands had formed, at the back of their little cottage.

Thunder! how often have I looked back with astonishment on those days, when on the gun-deck of the *Crescent* I stood at the head of five hundred of the boldest hearts of Tunis and Tripoli. Who then could have recognized in Osman, the bloodthirsty, the hypocritical Frà Lancelloti? Yes! I was ever a hypocrite, and regarded with scorn and detestation the sombre garb which tied me to the monastery. But my fate was not in my own

hands ; my parents were a son and daughter of old mother church, and I came into the world very unfortunately for both parties. They threw me into the lantern of San Baldassare, where, thirty years before, my father had been found himself. As a reward for giving me life, my mother died in the dungeons of San Marco, and my father expiated his share in the matter at the first general *auto-da-fé ;* so you see that I come of a martyred family.

A prisoner from my boyhood upwards, I looked upon the world as a realm of light and joy, from which I was for ever debarred by those mysterious vows which the monks had induced me to profess, before their meaning was understood. When, from my iron grate, I looked on the vale of the winding Isonza, blooming with foliage and verdure, and bounded by the blue Carinthian hills, and listened to the rushing sound of the free, bold river, how intense were my longings to follow its course to where it plunged headlong into the Gulf of Trieste,—where, for hours, I have watched the scudding sails, till my eyes and heart ached. O, hours of longing and of agony ! To see nature spread before me in all her glory, yet be unable to taste her sweets ; to be a prisoner without a crime. And love, or what the world calls love, I knew not what it was, though a secret spirit whispered within me : I longed to look on some fair face, and to hear a gentle voice reply to mine,—but love's magic, its mystery, and its madness, I was yet to learn. With a heart thus formed, and open to the assaults of that wicked little god,—whom the ancients should have depicted as a giant,—you may imagine my sensations on finding myself in the presence of Paula, whose face and form far outshone the famous Madonna of our chapel. A hot blush suffused my cheek, but the fair face of Paula revealed only the rosy tinge of health, and her brow the calm purity of perfect innocence. I was silent and *awed* in her presence : an Italian monk awed by a girl of seventeen !

With evening, I returned to the cloisters, and a chill sank upon my heart as their cold shadows fell over me. I was in my old dormitory, where the truckle-bed, the polished skull, the cross, and rough vaulted roof, seemed yet the same : but I was changed. The recollection of Paula's soft, gazelle-like eyes and snowy breast never left me for a moment, and I passed a sleepless night.

"O, that I were a soldier or a cavalier, for then Batello would respect, and his daughter might love me: but a priest—a priest—anathema! anathema! there is no hope for me—none! O, malediction! why did I ever behold thee, Paula!"

Thus passed the night. Noon found me again in the arbour of Batello's garden: the golden-haired and ruddy-cheeked Rosario was drawling over his task, but I neither heard nor beheld him. I saw only his sister, who, seated beneath the shadow of the luxuriant rose-trees, was immersed in the glowing pages of the warrior bard, Luigi Transilla, the brave follower of Piero di Toledo.

The rays of the sun streamed between the foliage of the arbour, lighting up her fair ringlets, which glittered like living gold; her white neck sparkled in the same mysterious radiance,—a glory seemed around her, and the soft, calm aspect of her downcast face, made her seem the very image of our lovely lady, the famed Madonna of Cantarini. Intoxicated with her appearance, I trembled when addressing her, while she entered frankly into conversation with me, on the merits of the soldier's poems. Full and calmly her mild eyes gazed on mine, yet no suspicion struck her of the passion which glowed within me, and which I dared not reveal, for death was the doom,—on the one hand, her firm father's poniard; on the other, the dungeons of the Piombi, or the horrors of the holy office.

By night, the ravings of my dreams were heard by the tenants of the adjoining dormitories, Petronio, and Truffi the crookback, and they soon learned from my mutterings that I loved Paula, the daughter of the Signor Batello. Petronio,—the same accursed Petronio, who, from his archiepiscopal palace, sent forth the mandate which entombed me here, when, after a tough battle with a Maltese cruiser, I was cast, half-drowned and bleeding, on the beach of Canne,—Petronio, whose matchless hypocrisy makes his villany even of a deeper dye than mine, then came to act the part of friend, to counsel me to destruction, and to become the evil genius of the good Batello and his innocent children.

A thorough Italian monk, dark, gloomy, and superstitious, he was my senior by fifteen years, and had secretly plunged into all the excesses of Venice. Like the fiendish hunchback, he was an adept in every dissimulation and debauchery, and boasted of his exploits, till, ashamed of

my weakness, I took heart, and burned for distinction in the same worthy fields. I put myself under his guidance and tuition: to effect what? O, innocent Paula!

I had resolved, by every art of reasoning and sophistry, to break down the barriers of religion and modesty, and bend her mind to my purpose. But each successive day, when I looked upon her snowy brow, her pure and happy face, blooming with beauty and radiant with youth, my diabolical purpose was left unfulfilled, unattempted, and my heart shrank from the contest.

Sometimes, young and handsome cavaliers, from the castle of Gradiska, or the citadal of Friuli, came to visit the old capitano, and the gallantry of their air, the glitter of their military garb and weapons, the ease with which they lounged about, strummed on the mandolin, or whispered soft nothings to the fair girl, made my envious heart burn with alternate rage and jealousy. Intensely I longed to be like one of them, and yet I could have slain them all, and Paula, too, when she smiled on them.

But I soon found a more powerful auxiliary to my love, than either Petronio's sophistry or Truffi's villany could furnish: and where, think you? In Paula's own heart. Ho! ho! a young girl soon discovers that which is the sole object of her thoughts by day, and her dreams by night,—a lover! There is a mysterious emotion, so pleasing to her heart, so flattering to her fancy, and altogether so peculiarly grateful to her mind, in being beloved, that she gives way to all the fervour of a first passion with joy and trembling. Ha! thou knowest the hearts of our Italian girls—warm, tender, and easily subdued: what more can lover wish?

The garrisons were marched to the Carinthian frontier, and the cavaliers came no more to the cottage of Batello: he spent the most of his time detailing his battles, and reading the Diaries and Gazette at the wine-house, while his old housekeeper (whom my cowl kept in awe) was always occupied in household matters. I kept Rosario close to his task, and, therefore, had the dear girl all to myself.

What could she hope for, in yielding to such a passion? Remorse, despair and madness! But of these the young damsel thought not then. Ha! I was then graceful and well-looking, and we both were young and ardently in love. My eyes, at one time, my tremulous tones at an-

other, had informed her of the mighty secret which preyed upon my heart, and which my lips dared not reveal, until the rapturous moment when I perceived the mutual flame that struggled in her bosom. Then, but not till *then*, did I pour forth a rhapsody expressive of my love, when, yielding to its burning impulses, all the long-concealed ardour of my heart burst at once upon her ear. Love lent a light to my eyes, a grace and gesture to my figure, and imparted new eloquence to my tongue; I was no longer myself,—no more the cold, cautious friar, but the impetuous Italian lover. The monk was forgotten in the man—my vows, in the delight of the moment; and the lovely Paula sank upon my shoulder, overcome with love and terror. O, hour of joy! when I first pressed my trembling lip to that soft and beautiful cheek. Long years of penance and of prayer, of dreary repining, of soul-crushing humiliation and sorrow, were all repaid by the bliss of that embrace, which I have never forgotten. No! not all the years that have passed since then—not all the dark villanies I have planned and perpetrated, and they are many—not all the dangers I have dared, and they are countless as the hairs of your head—not all the toils and miseries of a life, can efface it from my memory. I was happy then: I who, perhaps, have never been so since. * * * * * * * *

A footstep aroused us, and the blushing girl shrank from me as the little boy, Rosario, came gambolling towards the arbour, with a chaplet for her hair. I cast a fierce glance of hatred upon him. Even Paula was piqued, and refused to receive the flowers, upon which the child wept, and, pulling my cassock, prayed me to lecture his sister for being so coy.

"Scold her, Father Lancelloti," said he, rubbing his glittering eyes with his plump little hands, "for she will neither kiss me, nor receive my roses, to put among her pretty hair, as she used to love to do."

"Give me the flowers, child," said I: "shall *I* kiss sister Paula for you, Rosario?"

"O, yes, yes!" cried the little boy, "or sister Paula will kiss you, and then me."

Our lips met, and the agitated and infatuated Paula embraced the child, who laughed, and clapped his hands with innocent glee, and yet he knew not at what. At that moment, the long sword of the captain jarred on the gravel

walk, and his heavy tread rang beneath the trellis of the garden. Aware that, as a priest, I had wronged him in the declaration made to his daughter, and that I had committed a deadly sin before God, I shrank from meeting him, and, leaping over the garden-wall, returned to the monastery, where, not without sensations of triumph, I recounted my conquest to Petronio and the hunchback.

Three days I visited her as usual, and rejoiced in the success of my amour; for I loved her tenderly and dearly. My air was so sanctified, that the most jealous guardian would not have suspected me; then how much less the good Batello, who, by his profession, had been accustomed to intercourse with men of the strictest honour, and suspected no man of duplicity, because his own brave heart was guileless.

My rose-bud of love was just beginning to bloom, when matters were doomed to have a terrible crisis.

One bright forenoon, when Rosario had finished his task, I was about to return to Friuli, and merely bowed to Paula, because her father was present.

"Brother Lancelloti," said he, grasping my cope, "hast heard the news? The senate is about to declare war against the Turks, and the capeletti are to be doubled. Brave news for an old soldier, eh? I may be a colonello, with Rosario for captain! Come hither, thou chubby rogue—wouldst like to be a captain?"

"O, yes, if sister Paula would play with me as she used to do, and kiss me, instead of Father Lancelloti."

"Rosario, what sayest thou?" cried the fierce old soldier, with a stentorian voice, while Paula grew pale as death, and my spirit died away within me; but the terrified child made no reply. The captain's face was black with rage; his eyes sparkled, and stern scorn curled his lip; yet he spoke calmly.

"Go—go, Father Lancelloti, and may God forgive you! I will not require the services of your faithful reverence from to-day. Away—march! or you may fare worse: dare not to come here again; I am Annibal Batello—thou knowest me!" And, touching the hilt of his sword, he turned on his heel and left me.

I rushed away, overwhelmed with bitterness, rage, and humiliation, and hating Rosario with the hate of a fiend.

To Truffi and Petronio my story was the source of endless merriment; the hunchback snapped his fingers, whooped, and laughed till the cloisters rang with his elfish joy. Deprived of my mistress, whom I dared not visit for dread of the captain's sword, stung by the taunts of my friends, dejected and filled with gloomy forebodings, the cloisters soon became intolerable to me. I formed many a romantic and desperate scheme to rid myself of those cursed trammels which monkish duplicity had cast around me in boyhood; but thoughts of the holy office, the Piombi, and the fate of my father, filled me with dismay, and I dared not fly from Friuli.

One day, whilst wandering far up the banks of the Isonza, with a heart swollen by bitter thoughts, I plunged into the deepest recesses, in search of solitude. Reaching the cascade which falls beneath the ancient castle of Fana, I paused to listen to the rushing water, whose tumult so much resembled my own mind. The voice of no living thing, save that of the lynx, broke the stillness around me; the lofty trees of the dense forest, clad in the richest foliage of summer, cast a deep shadow over the bed of the dark blue stream, which swept noiselessly on, between gloomy impending cliffs, until it reached the fall, where it poured over a broad ledge of rock, and thundered into a terrible abyss, whence the foam arose in a mighty cloud, white as Alpine snow. Rearing its grey and mossy towers high above the waving woods, the shattered rocks, and roaring river, the ancient castello looked down on the solitude beneath it. A mighty place in days gone by, it had been demolished by the bailiff of Friuli, for the crimes of Count Giulio, and was now roofless and ruined; the green ivy clung to the carved battlement, and the rays of the bright sun poured aslant through its open loops and empty windows. But the scenery soothed not my heart; I burned for active excitement, to shake off the stupor that oppressed me.

A turn of the walk brought me suddenly upon the little boy, Rosario, who was weaving a chaplet of wild roses and trailing daphne, culled, doubtless, for the bright tresses of Paula. Remembering some stern injunction from his father, on beholding me, he fled as from a spectre. Like a tiger, I sprang after him; fear added wings to his flight: but I was close behind. A fall on the rocks redoubled

my anger and impatience, and I caught him by his long, fair hair, while he was in the very act of laughing at my mishap.

"Cursed little babbler!" said I, shaking him roughly; "what deservest thou at my hands?"

"Spare me, good Father Lancelloti, and I will never offend again."

"Silence, or I will tear out thy tongue!"

My aspect terrified him, and he screamed on his father and Paula to save him.

"Paula!" said I, shaking him again; "thy devilish tongue hath destroyed Paula and me too."

"Spare me!" said he, whimpering and smiling; "and pretty sister Paula will kiss you for my sake."

"Anathema upon thee!" His words redoubled my fury, and I spat on him. The cascade roared beside me, the deepest solitude was around us, hell was in my heart, and the devil guided my hand; I launched the screaming child from the rocks; headlong he fell through the air, and vanished in the cloudy spray of the vast abyss. The bright sun became suddenly obscured by a cloud, and a deeper gloom stole over the dell of Fana; the ruined tower seemed a monstrous head, and its windows invidious eyes looking down on me—the landscape swam around, and I heard a cry of *murder* above the roar of the cascade. The yell of a lynx completed my terror, and I rushed in frenzy from the spot. * * * *

I was in my dormitory: the darkness of night was in my soul and all around me; overwhelmed with an excess of horror for my wanton crime, I spent the night in the agonies of penance and prayer, and making mental vows to sin no more. Had the universe been mine, I would have given it, that Rosario might be restored to life. O, that I could have lived the last day over again, or have blotted it for ever from my mind! But, alas! the strong and dark fiend had marked me for his own. Through the silence of the still, calm night, came the rush of the distant river; there was madness in the sound, but I could not exclude it, and the cry of the poor child mingled ever with its roar. Humble in spirit and contrite in heart, at morning matins I bowed down in prayer among the brotherhood. The sublime symphonies of the hymn *Veni Creator*, or of the litanies of our lady of Loretto, the song of the choir and the mellifluous strain of the organ, rang

beneath the vaulted dome like the voice of God and the knell of death; and yet they spoke of hope—hope to the repentant—and I prostrated myself before the altar; tears burst from my eyes, and the fire of my heart was assuaged.

I left the monastery to seek some calm solitude, wherein to pour forth my soul in secret prayer, but my evil genius was beside me, and guided me to detection and disgrace. I wandered on, but knew not and cared not whither, wishing only to fly from the haunts of men and my own burning thoughts. Vain idea! Rosario, as he sank among the spray, his sister's tears, his father's sorrow, were ever before me, and I looked upon myself with horror.

"Good father," cried a voice, disturbing my dreadful reverie; "O, reverend signor, help, in the name of the Blessed Trinity!"

I started with dismay—what did I behold? The white-haired veteran, Batello, bearing in his arms the dripping corpse of Rosario, while Paula clung to him, overcome with sorrow and terror. Even the venerable goat-herd, whose crook had fished up the dead child, was moved to tears; while I, the cause of the calamity, looked on with unmoved visage. Was it an index of my mind? O, no! a serpent was gnawing my heart; I could have screamed with agony, and my breath came close and thick. I trembled and panted while Batello spoke.

"Frà Lancelloti," said he, "thou comest upon me in an hour of deep woe, when I have much need of godly consolation; but not from thy lips. A week ago, we quarrelled: I know the weakness of the human heart, and from the bottom of my soul forgive thee, for in this terrible moment I cannot look on any man with anger. Pass on, in the name of God! for thy presence is—I know not why—peculiarly hateful to me at this moment. Many a dead face have I looked upon by breach and battle-field, but thou—my Rosario—thy mother—" and the old soldier kissed his dead child, and wept bitterly.

The goat-herd, who had been observing me narrowly, now whispered in Batello's ear. His eyes glared; and, relinquishing the body, with one hand he grasped his sword, with the other my throat.

"Double-dyed villain!—hypocrite!—thou knowest of this, and canst say how Rosario died! Speak, or this

sword, never yet stained with the blood of a coward, shall compel thee!"

"Sacrilege!" I gasped, while Paula swooned; "Sacrilege!—I am a priest—"

"Rosario's hand grasps part of a rosary—lo! thy chaplet is broken, and the beads are the same. Speak, ere I slay thee!" and he drew his sword.

Trembling, I glanced at my girdle; but a half of my chaplet hung there; the other was grasped in the tenacious hand of Rosario. Overwhelmed with terror, I attempted to escape; and, in the blindness of his fury, the old man struck me repeatedly with his sword, while he cried aloud for help. Transported with fury at the sight of my own blood, and dreading discovery, I became mad, and plunged yet deeper into crime: closing with him, my strength and youth prevailed over his frame, now enfeebled by age, wounds, and long campaigns; I struck him to the earth, and with his own sword stabbed him to the heart. His blood streamed over Paula—I remember nothing more. I fled to the hills, and, throwing off my upper vestments, wandered in wild places, far from the reach of the Grand Bailiff, who offered five hundred ducats for my head, sent the carbineers of Gradiska and the vassals of the duchy, to hunt me down, and established such a close chain of communication along the frontiers, that escape was almost impossible. He solemnly vowed to avenge the murder of Batello (who had been the friend and fellow-soldier of his father, the old count of Lanthiri), and I should assuredly have become his victim, and been consigned to the gallows or the holy office, had I not been joined by Gaspare Truffi; who, after transferring to his own pouch every bajoccho in the convent treasury, had come to share my fortunes in the wilderness.

Changing our attire, we embarked for Greece; but were captured off Calabria by a corsair of Tunis. Whereupon, I instantly turned Mussulman, and served his highness the Bey with such courage and devotion, that, as Osman Carora, I became the idol of the Tunisians, and terror of the Mediterranean. Enough!—thou knowest the rest. Shipwreck and the fortune of war placed me in the power of my old friend Petronio—and I am here."

"And Paula?"

"Became contessa di Lanthiri, and soon forgot poor Frà Lancelloti."

Such was the story related to me by the third captive whom those vaults contained: I have jotted it down just as it was related to me; but without the many pauses of maudlin grief, or oaths of rage, with which his half-intoxicated state caused him to intersperse it.

I need hardly add, that I left this deliberate ruffian to his fate, locking all the doors securely behind me; and, to make the keeper more alert in future—as I intended to return no more—I left my false keys in his niche in the little chapel. The terrified warder, on finding a set of keys the exact counterpart of his own, declared they must have belonged either to Virgil, or to the devil; they were destroyed, the vaults sprinkled with holy water, and the wizard was seen no more.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

It was a clear and beautiful morning when I issued forth on my return to the cardinal's villa. As I passed a cantina by the roadside, under a trellis in front of it, I encountered two personages, whom I had no wish to meet on that side of Massena's lines; the surly Captain Pepe, who treated me so insultingly at Crotona, and Truffi, the hunchback, whom I recognized, notwithstanding his disguise—a white Cistercian frock and shovel hat. Draughts, dominoes, and wine-horns were before them; and they had apparently passed the night at the table over which they leaned, sleeping away the fumes of their potations.

As I passed, an unlucky house-dog leaped forth from his barrel, yelling and shaking his chain. The captain, yet half intoxicated, started up and felt for his sword, and I saw a bastia knife gleaming in the long lean fingers of the cripple.

"Corpo!" said he, "'tis only a priest."

"Hola! call you that fellow a priest?" replied Pepe, balancing himself with difficulty; but, drunk as he was, he had the eyes of a lynx, and knew me in a moment. "*Mille baionettes!* an English spy. Ah, Monsieur Aide-de-camp—villain! Hola, the quarter-guard! Hola! the provost, and the noose from the nearest tree; *à la lanterne!*"

He staggered towards me with his drawn sabre, and I, supposing the cantina was full of soldiers, became alarmed, as the hideous Truffi yelled and whooped till the welkin rang. My death was certain, if captured: not even York could have saved it, or those important despatches with which the general intrusted me. But I thought less of them than of Bianca, life, liberty, and honour. I easily wrenched Pepe's sabre from him, and knocked him down with my clenched hand; his head clattered on the hard, dusty road, and he lay motionless. Truffi rushed on me with his poniard, but I dealt him a blow across the head with my sabre, and he fell prone over the body of his companion.

I fled to the villa, entered unseen, and threw myself panting upon my bed; where, notwithstanding my fears and agitation, I soon fell fast asleep.

In two hours after, I was awakened by Catanio, whose countenance betokened something unusual. My first thought was of Captain Pepe.

"The courier has arrived from Rome, and his majesty awaits you." I leaped up, joyful at being undeceived so agreeably.

"Has he brought the signora's dispensation?"

"His majesty has not said."

My toilet was soon completed, and I was ushered into the presence of the cardinal, who was seated at breakfast. His Irish valet was in attendance. The plainness of his equipage contrasted strongly with the splendour of his pretensions. He was busy reading, and heard not our approach.

"You see him, perhaps, for the last time," whispered Catanio. "Behold? does there not reign around him a mystic dignity that makes him seem as much a king as if he stood in the halls of Windsor or Holyrood? Ah, who can look on such a man, declining into the vale of life, venerable with years, the majesty and memory of ages, without being moved? But this is a cold and calculating age, without veneration for the past; and the regrets of those who love it provoke but a smile from the selfish and unreflecting."

Without partaking of his enthusiasm, I was not a little moved by his tone and words.

"Catanio, place a chair for Captain Dundas," said the

cardinal, perceiving us. "Sir, you will breakfast with me, as I have intelligence for you. Our most holy father has been pleased to dispense with the vows of the Signora d'Alfieri, at my intercession, and on presenting this document to the abbess at Canne, she will be free to quit the convent and resume her place in society. This is the despatch from the spedizioniere of the papal court."

I returned thanks with suitable sincerity of manner.

"Zamori, a Calabrian fisherman of Gierazzo, is now in the harbour of Canne with his little vessel, which, as Catanio informs me, will sail in the evening; on receipt of my order, Zamori will convey you to any part in Calabria, or place you on board the British frigate, now cruising in the Adriatic."

"A fisherman's bark will be but a comfortless place on these rough waters for the delicate signora. But O, most sincerely have I to thank your eminence for the interest you have taken in this matter, and the kindness you have shown me."

"Captain Dundas, *here* at least I am a king!" said the old man, whose broad brow became clouded for the first time. "Though exiled, forgotten by Britain, and standing on the verge of the tomb, I will yield my pretensions only with my last breath."

My reply was interrupted by the appearance of six French soldiers, with a sergeant, coming down the avenue at a quick pace, with their bayonets fixed. I remembered my encounter with Pepe, the keen glances of Compere in the church, and all the dangers of my situation flashed upon me: I stood, irresolute whether to fight, fly, or surrender.

"Sir, they are no doubt in pursuit of you," said the cardinal, his aged cheek beginning to flush; "but will they dare to cross my threshold? Alas! what will they not? The invasion of Rome, the expulsion of the sacred college, and the seizure of Pius himself, are yet fresh in my recollection. Catanio meet them at the porch, and in the name of God dare them to enter the house of one of his servants!"

"Alas!" replied Catanio, "let me implore your majesty to pause. We are but three aged and infirm men, against seven soldiers, armed, insolent, and rapacious, as the followers of a usurper ever are."

"This is no time for delay. Away, Captain Dundas!" exclaimed York; "you must fly. Catanio will lead you to the beach ere the house is surrounded. Farewell, sir; a long farewell to you: we may never meet again."

Deeply moved by the old man's manner, I bowed, and, according to the custom, kissed the hand he extended towards me; a massive ruby ring—the great coronation ring of our ancient kings—sparkled on his finger.

Catanio hurried me away, and, by the most unfrequented paths we reached the beach, while the soldiers surrounded and searched the villa.

The cardinal died a few months afterwards, at Rome, in the eighty-second year of his age, and was buried between his father and brother at Frescati. Henry IX. is inscribed on his tomb, which the genius of Canova has adorned with the most splendid sculpture. It is a curious fact, that till the last day of his life, the cardinal was in communication with many men of rank, wealth, and power, who seemed still to have entertained the chimerical hope of placing him on the British throne; and many documents discovered after his decease, and now preserved in our archives, prove that his family had, even then, numerous adherents in the three kingdoms; some of them men whom the government could little have suspected of such sentiments. Buonaparte, too—that overturner of kings and kingdoms—is said to have expressed a wish to place him on the throne, and, as an earnest of his friendship, robbed him of his French estates; but the star of the Stuarts had set. George III. kindly and wisely passed over in silence the names of those whose romantic enthusiasm, or political bias, the papers of the cardinal-duke had so awkwardly revealed.

I got on board Zamori's little sloop in safety, and, in obedience to the cardinal's command, the warp was cast off, the sweeps run out, and he anchored about half a mile from the shore. Catanio left me, promising to return after dusk with the signora, whom I anxiously awaited, expecting every minute to see bayonets glittering on the sunny beach, or a boat filled with armed men push off towards the barque of Zamori.

The latter was a garrulous old fellow, whose tongue gave me very little time for reflection. Night began to close over Canne, and I beheld its approach with joy; the day had

seemed interminably long. The evening gun was fired from the French fort, the tricolour descended from its ramparts, and I heard the evening hymn floating over the glassy sea from the various craft around us, where many of the sailors lay stretched upon bundles of sails, smoking cigars, tinkling the mandolin, and enjoying the rich sunset of their glorious clime. Sinking behind the mountains, the sun bade us adieu, darkness gradually crept along the winding shore, and white vapours curled in fantastic shapes from the low flats and ravines; slowly and brightly the moon soared into view, bathing land and ocean in a flood of silvery light.

I lay on a bundle of sails listening to the skipper's legends of the young count of Caulonia, who fell in love with a mermaid that arose from her coral cave in the Gulf of Gierazzo, and sat beneath his castle walls singing as the syrens sung to Ulysses, and of the wondrous demon-fish caught in Naples, in 1722, with a man in armour in its stomach, and Heaven knows what more. Hearing the dash of oars alongside the *Echino*, as Zamori's bark was named, and seeing a boat shoot under her quarter, I leapt up. I went to the side, and received Catanio, who handed up Francesca d'Alfieri. The poor girl was so happy to find herself free, and intrusted to my care, that she could only weep with joy, uttering sobs in the depths of an ample satin faldetta which the abbess had given her, with two rosemary sprigs sewn crosswise in front, to scare away evil spirits.

"Farewell to you, captain!" said Catanio, or Duncan Catanach; "do no not forget us, when you go home to the land we love so well."

"Good-bye; God bless you, old man!" I replied, as the boat was pushed off and moved shoreward.

The dark grave has long closed over the faithful Catanach and his illustrious master; but memory yet recalls the old man's visage: I can see it, as I saw it then,—clouded by honest sorrow, and its hard, wrinkled features tinged by the light of the moon.

An hour afterwards, we were ploughing the waters of the gulf, with the broad latteen sail of the *Echino* bellying taut before the breeze, as she cleft the billows with her sharp-beaked prow. Zamori grasped the tiller with important confidence; the crew, his two athletic and black-

browed sons, remained forward, and I seated myself beside the signora, who, permitting her hood to fall back, the moon shone on her beautiful features and glossy hair. So dangerous an attraction near old Zamori disturbed his steering, and the *Echino* yawed till her sail flapped to the mast.

"A sweet face!" he muttered, as the boat careened over; "but it will work mischief, like the mermaids."

"O, signor, I am happy, so *very* happy!" said Francesca; the richness of her tone, and the artlessness of her manner moved me. "Shall we soon see Calabria?"

"That is Capo Trionto," said I, pointing ahead.

"Dear Calabria," she exclaimed, kissing her hand to the distant coast; "there was a time when I thought never to behold thee more! Beautiful star!" continued the enthusiastic girl, pointing to a twinkling orb; "signor, is it not lovely? alas! 'tis gone; perhaps it is a world!" she added, clasping her hands, as it shot from its place and vanished. The increasing roughness of the sea, as we sailed along the high Calabrian coast, soon made Francesca uneasy; her prattle died away; she became very sick, and lay in the stern-sheets of the boat, covered up with Zamori's warm storm-jacket, and a spare jib—both rather coarse coverings for a beautiful and delicate female. At length she slept, and I was left for a time to my own reflections.

About midnight, I was roused from a sound nap by Zamori.

"Look around you, excellency," said he, in a whisper; "saw you ever aught so splendid—so terrible?"

Like a vast globe of gold, the shining moon was resting on the summit of Cape Trionto, which, rising black as ebony from the ocean, heaved its strongly-marked outline against the illuminated sky; its ridge was marked by a streak of fiery yellow. The water was phosphorescent, the waves seemed to be burning around us, and we sped through an ocean of light! The spray flying past our bows seemed like sparks of living fire; the ropes trailing over the gunnel, and the myriads of animalculæ which animate every drop of the mighty deep, were all shining with magic splendour. An exclamation of rapture escaped me; at that moment the moon sank down behind Trionto; in an instant, the sea became dark, and not a trace of all that glorious and magnificent illumination remained behind.

"Have you seen these often, Zamori?"

"No!" said he, shuddering, and crossing himself; "but such sights never bode good. We shall have the French in Lower Calabria soon. 'Tis Fata Morgana," he added, whispering; "she dwells in the Straits of Messina. I have seen her palace of coral and crystal rise above the waves. She is a mermaid of potent power; God send that we have no breeze before morning!"

Cape St. James was in sight when the sun arose from the ocean, revealing all the glories of the beautiful coast and sparkling sea. After the stout Calabrians had knelt and prayed to a rudely-carved Madonna, nailed above the horse-shoe on the mast, I partook of their humble breakfast, which consisted of olives, salt-fish, maccaroni, and sour wine; the signora was too much indisposed to join us.

I looked forward with pleasure to assuming my important command at Scylla, but other prospects made me happier still. I welcomed the freshening breeze, as the little bark rushed through the surging sea which boiled over her gunnels, and roared like a cascade under her counter; while the ruin-crowned or foliaged headlands, and the countless peaks which towered above them, changed their aspect every moment as we flew on. I thought of my smiling Bianca, and hailed with joy the hills of Maida. We beheld the evening sun gilding the Syla, and at night were off Crotona, and saw the lights glimmering in its narrow streets and gloomy citadel, where Macleod was stationed with his Highlanders. Anchored close under its ramparts, lay the *Amphion*, and brave Hanfield's sloop of war, the *Delight*. The sky was dark and lowering, the sea black as ink; everything portended a rough night, and I was well pleased that our voyage was over.

My despatch for Captain Hoste required him to bring round the Ross-shire Buffs without delay to Messina, and the order was forthwith given to heave short, to cast loose the sails, and lower away all the boats.

My old friend Castagno, with a party of the Free Corps, formed the guard at the citadel gate; I was immediately recognized, and, consigning the happy Francesca to his care, beat up the quarters of Macleod. I found him comfortably carousing with Drumlugas and some of his officers, who were passing a portly jar of gioja round the table with

great celerity. When the curiosity and laughter occasioned by my attire had subsided, and when the general's order had been read, I related my adventures, passing over the visits to the vaults, and the discovery of Francesca d'Alfieri.

An hour before gun-fire, the Buffs were all on board the frigate; her ample canvas was spread to the breezes of the Adriatic, and by sunrise we saw her vanish round the promontory of Lacinium. The cavaliere Benedetto, with four hundred rank and file of the Free Corps, was left to hold Crotona; while, by Macleod's order, I took command of a company of those troops which the *Amphion* could not accommodate; that evening, bidding adieu to brave Castagno (whom I never saw again), we marched *en route* for St. Eufemio, where I was to see them safely embarked for Messina.

Thanks to Macleod and his officers, my attire had now become a little more professional; one gave me a regimental jacket, another a tartan forage-cap, a third a sash, and Drumlugas presented me with a very handsome sabre, of which he had deprived the Swiss colonel, whom he vanquished at Maida. In this motley uniform, I rode at the head of the Free Company, which formed a very respectable escort for Francesca and her sister, who accompanied us; both were mounted on fiery-eyed Calabrian horses, a breed famous for their strength and endurance. While so many bayonets glittered around them, the ladies had no fear of banditti; Ortensia laughing merrily, made her horse curvet and prance, and lent her soft melodious voice to the jovial chorus with which the Italian soldiers lightened the toil of their morning march. But Francesca was reserved, and beneath her veil I often saw tears suffusing her mild and melancholy eyes.

"Dear Francesca, why are you so sad?" asked her sister; "O, now is the time for joy! See how brightly the sun shines on the distant sea, and how merrily the green woods are waving in the breeze. Most unkind, Francesca! for your sake, I have left my poor Benedetto in that gloomy castle of Crotona. Laugh and be joyous. Think on the happiness awaiting us at home, and the embrace of our dear little Bianca, when she throws her arms around you."

"And Luigi," added Francesca, unable to restrain her tears.

The path we pursued was different from that which I had travelled before, and the intense solitude around it was almost oppressive. We were marching through a dense forest, where not a sound broke its stillness, save the cry of a solitary lynx, or the flap of an eagle's wing, as he soared to his eyrie in the sandstone cliffs, which reared their rugged front above the woodlands. White wreaths of distant smoke shot up in vapoury columns through the green foliage, announcing that the wild contained other human beings than ourselves, but whether these were poor charcoal-burners, or robbers roasting a fat buck on the green sward, we knew not. We passed one or two lonely cottages, where the labouring hinds were separating grain from its husks, by the ancient modes—trampling the corn under the hoofs of cattle, or rolling over it a large stone drawn by a team of stout buffaloes.

Calabria was then (and perhaps is yet) widely different from every other part of Italy; its peculiar situation, its lofty mountains, its dense forests, spreading from sea to sea, and intersected by few roads, and its hordes of banditti, made it dangerous and difficult of access to the artist and tourist; consequently, until the close of Manhes' campaign of blood, it was an unknown territory to the rest of Europe. These circumstances rendered the natives rude in character, and revengeful in spirit, and thus a mighty barrier rose between the lower orders and the noblesse; who (in the words of a recent writer on Italy), "live wholly apart from the people—they compose two entirely distinct worlds."

After halting in forests during the sultry noon, cantoning in villages, and marching in the cool morning and evening for two days, we arrived near Amato, a little town within a few leagues of the Villa d'Alfieri. We were traversing a deep pass of the Apennines, when the evening, which had been serene and fine, became clouded; the lowering sky portended a coming tempest. We pushed on, at an increased pace, to reach a castellated villa, the residence of a Calabrian of rank, which we saw perched on an isolated mass of rock, about a league up the mountains. Striking and picturesque appeared the vale of Amato, as the setting sun poured its last blaze of radiance down the deep gorge, between the dark wooded hills, gilding the crenellated battlements, Saracenic galleries, and Norman

keep of the distant castle, and reflected in the river, which glowed like a stream of molten gold between thickets of sombre cypress and fragrant orange-trees. Gradually the hue of the setting orb changed from bright saffron to deep red, and a flood of crimson lustre fell over everything, tinging the lofty hills, the thick woods, the glassy river, with a blood-red tint, which rapidly became more sombre as the sun disappeared behind the pine-clad hills. Then thunder rumbled through the darkening sky; gloomy banks of cloud came scudding across it, and volumes of vapour rolled away from the bed of the Amato.

"On, on!" cried Francesca; "O, the storm will be a terrible one; feel you not the very blast of the sirocco? Alas! we may die among the mountains. Yonder is the residence of Guelfo, the Buonapartist—ah! the subtle knave! If we trust ourselves under his roof, say not a word of Luigi, and mention not our names. Ah! if he should recognize us; you remember that terrible night with the conciarotti and the mob of Palermo.

They pushed forward at a gallop, and I followed, after leaving orders with old Signor Gismondo, who—as I ought to have mentioned before—was captain of the Free Company, to continue his route, double-quick, to Amato, where we would rejoin him by daybreak next day. Gismondo was now grave, reserved, and melancholy in the extreme; but I was much pleased at renewing my acquaintance with him. Poor man! it was fated to be of short duration. We had scarcely separated, before the lightning gleamed between the splintered rocks of the pass; the air became sulphurous, close, and dense; in five minutes, it was dark; we saw the luminous glow-worms sparkling amid the dewy grass beneath the shady foliage, while ever and anon the red lightning shot from peak to peak, illuminating the scenery with its lurid glare. After scrambling up a steep ascent, the face of which was scarped and defended by four pieces of *French* cannon, we reached the gate of this Neapolitan lord, whom I had no wish to meet again, as his bad political bias had gained him an unfavourable name in Calabria. Numerous towers and curtain-walls of red stone surrounded the building; few windows were visible outwardly, and those were far from the ground, and well barred with time-worn stanchions.

Passing through a gate, surmounted by a wolf's head cabossed on a shield, and surrounded by the collar of shells, with the crescent and ship of the Knights Argonauts of San Nicolo, we dismounted in the court-yard.

"Alas! for poor Gismondo and his soldiers!" exclaimed Francesca, as the gates were closed, and the descending storm burst forth in all its fury.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CASTELGUELFO—THE WOLF OF AMATO.

By the barone, a short and meagre little man of a most forbidding aspect, we were received with all due honour and courtesy, and without being recognized; but his residence was so full of armed men, that it could scarcely afford us accommodation, ample though its towers and corridors seemed to be.

"These are Lucchesi, the most hideous provincials of Italy; those wanderers, who spread over all Europe with organs and monkeys," whispered Ortensia, as we passed through the court, which was crowded with the most savage-looking fellows imaginable. Many were half naked, or clad only in the skins of sheep and lynxes, beneath which might be seen the remains of a ragged shirt, a tattered vest, or breeches, once red or yellow; their legs and feet were bare; some had old battered hats, or red slouched caps; but the greater number had only their shock heads of hair, bleached by the weather till it was coarse as a charger's mane, and overhanging their gaunt, ferocious visages, grim with starvation and misery, which ever accompanied French invasion. A few wore the gallant bandit costume of the south, and all were carousing, and filling the hollow towers, the dark arcades, and echoing corridors, with bursts of brutal laughter, to lighten their work; for all were busy, polishing rifle and pistol-locks, and grinding the blades of sabres, poniards, and pikes. My fair companions shrank with dismay from the hall windows when they viewed the assemblage below, and even I did not feel quite at ease; especially after seeing about two hundred stand of *French* arms and accoutrements ranged along the vestibule.

"Signor Barone, you keep a strong garrison here," said I, smiling, while we surveyed the motley crew of ruffians from a lofty oriel: "do you expect Massena to pass the Amato soon?"

"That would be superb!" replied he, with a grin, which revealed his ample and wolfish jaws. "No, no, 'tis only my good friend Scarolla, the valiant captain of four hundred free companions, who is here with his band; we are bound on a little piece of service together. Ha! ha! if that fool Belcastro had not poisoned himself instead of the Maltese Knight, he would have been here too.

At that moment, Scarolla approached: I attentively surveyed the celebrated bandit-chief, whose name, in the annals of Italian ferocity, stands second only to that of Mammone, "the blood-quaffer." He was above six feet high, and moulded like a Hercules; dark as that of a Negro, his mean visage announced him a Lucchese; long black hair hung down his back, and a thick beard fringed his chin. The band of his ample beaver, his velvet jacket, and mantello, were covered with the richest embroidery, and a silver-hilted poniard glittered in his waist-belt. His brows were knit and lowering, his eyes keen and sinister: the ladies trembled beneath the bold scrutiny of his glance, and shrank close to my side for protection, while the withered little barone introduced us.

"Signor Inglese, the valiant Capitano Scarolla; brave men ought to know each other: you are both captains, remember."

"Serving under different leaders," I replied, while bowing, and repressing a scornful smile.

"Superba!" cried the little barone, laughing and rubbing his hands; but Scarolla's brows knit closer, and his eyes kindled at my inuendo.

The hall was now lighted by several tall candelabra; their lustre was reflected from the gilded columns and pendants of the lofty roof, and the frames of dark, gloomy, and mysterious portraits of the ancient Guelfi, who seemed scowling from their panels on their degenerate descendant and his unworthy confederate.

That ancient apartment, when viewed as I beheld it, one-half bathed in warm light, and the other sunk in cold shadow, seemed the very scene of a romance; to which the graceful figures of the Signora del Castagno and her sister,

and the picturesque garb of the tall Scarolla, gave additional effect. Nor were appropriate sounds wanting, for a storm raged in the valley below, thunder growled in the mountains above, and the rain rushed like hail on the casements, the painted traceries of which were often lit by fitful gleams of the moon, or the blue forked lightning, as it shot from hill to hill.

Uneasy in the presence of Scarolla, the ladies, after a slight refreshment, withdrew to repose, promising to be up with the lark for our journey to-morrow.

When travelling, or on active service, one is compelled to accommodate oneself to every kind of society, place, and circumstance; and, upon this philosophical principle, I made myself quite at home, and supped merrily with the barone and bandit, of whom the servants stood in the greatest awe. Supper over, wine was produced: however abstemious the Italians may be, I saw no sign of the national trait that night at Castelguelfo, where we drank the richest continental wines, emptying the decanters in rapid succession, as if we had been three Germans drinking for a wager.

Rendered mellow by his potations, our host became talkative; and, in spite of the nods and contemptuous frowns of the impatient Scarolla, informed me that he was collecting men to make a political demonstration, of which I should soon hear at Palermo—an attack on a powerful feudatory, with whom he had a deadly quarrel, which the presence of our army only smothered for a time.

"It will be superb," grinned the barone. "I hate him with the stern bitterness of a thorough old Calabrese. Thrice has he crossed me at court; he caused Ferdinand to regard me with coldness and jealousy; and when all the nobles of the province received the order of San Constantino, I alone was left undecorated, and my name, the oldest in Naples, was forgotten. We have now the country to ourselves; and, taking advantage of the lull, all Italy, from Scylla to the Alps, shall ring with my retribution. Yesterday, Crotona was abandoned to the Calabri; the soldiers who fought and won at Maida have all withdrawn, and there is no one to mar my revenge. O, it will be signal! In their king's service, the followers of my foe are all in garrison at Reggio, and his residence is

unprotected. I have a hundred sbirri well mounted, armed, and faithful; Scarolla has four hundred of the bravest rogues that ever levelled a rifle. Superba! Loyal visconte, beware the fangs of the Wolf! Per Baccho! there shall be a modern feud between the Guelfi and Alfieri, famous as that they had of old—ha! ha!"

"The Villa d'Alfieri is then the point of attack," said I.

"Superba!" screamed the little barone, who was becoming more inebriated; "yes, I will clothe its walls in flames; and, if blood can quench them, then so shall they be quenched. Yea, in blood, shed where my ancestor's yet cries for vengeance. Viva Giuseppe Buonaparté!"

"One alone shall be spared, excellency;" remarked Scarolla, who was also becoming excited.

"So I have promised you, prince of rogues, as the price of your services. The plunder of the villa belongs to your followers, and to you falls that glorious prize, the theme of our improvisatori, the pride of the Calabrias——"

"Bianca d'Alfieri!" added Scarolla, his eyes lighting with insolent triumph.

"Superb! is she not?" laughed the barone.

"God curse you both," I muttered, instinctively feeling for my sabre, and gulping down my wine, to hide the passion that boiled within me. I thanked heaven that they knew not of Gismondo and his company, by whom I hoped the villa would be saved from this revengeful rebel.

"When does the attack take place, signor?"

"To-morrow, at midnight. We will burn a light at St. Eufemio that will astonish the good citizens of Messina, and scare Fata Morgana in her ocean palace. You are on your way to Palermo?"

I bowed.

"Say, when you get there, that Castelguelfo is in league with Regnier, has burned the grand bailiff, and hoisted the standard of Giuseppe of Naples; cospetto! the cross of the iron crown will outweigh the star of Constantine!"

"Success to the expedition, signori," said I, drinking, to conceal my anger and confusion. "Faith! this is quite a

revival of that ancient feud, of which the improvisatori sing so much."

"And long will they sing of the diabolical treachery of the Alfieri."

"Signor, I would gladly hear the relation."

"You shall, in a few words. You have heard of the famous fighting Dominican, Campanella, who, in 1590, raised the banner of revolt in the Calabrias; my ancestor, Barone Amadeo, disgusted by Spanish misrule, joined him with three hundred men-at-arms; but these were all defeated and slaughtered by the followers of the then Visconte Santugo, on the same field of Maida where you so lately vanquished Regnier. Then commenced the quarrel between the Guelfi and the Alfieri, which, though we never came to blows, has survived for two centuries, and has settled down into coldness, mistrust, and jealousy, intriguing at court, and petty squabbling at home. We are old-fashioned people here; but France holds out civilization and regeneration to us. Well, Messer Amadeo was defeated, and Santugo gave his castle to the flames, so that the Wolf of Amato might have nowhere to lay his head. An outcast, deserted by his followers and abandoned by all, he wandered long in the wild forest of St. Eufemio, until, reduced to the last extremities of hunger and despair, he resolved to throw himself upon the generosity of his triumphant enemy; and, knocking at the gate of the castle of Santugo, craved the insolent porter to admit him to the visconte's presence. He was absent, fighting against Campanella; but Theodelinde, of Bova, his young wife, resided at the castle during his campaign.

"Gaunt, from long-continued misery, overgrown with a mass of beard and hair, clad in the skins of his namesake the wolf, instead of the knightly Milan steel, and grasping a knotted staff in lieu of the bright-bladed falchion of Ferrara—Messer Amadeo had more the aspect of an ancient satyr than a Neapolitan cavalier.

"'Madonna mia!' cried Theodelinde, with dismay, 'Who art thou?'

"'Signora, thou beholdest Guelfo, the persecuted lord of Amato, who is come to cast himself at thy feet. My territories spread from the Tyrrhene to the Adriatic Sea; they have passed away, my people are destroyed, my

castle is ruined, and I have nowhere to lay my head, save in the grave. Though thy husband's foe, take pity upon me, gentle signora: I am perishing with want, for the ban of God and the king are upon me, and no man dares to give me a morsel of bread or a cup of water.'

"Gentle in spirit, and milder in blood than our Italian dames, Theodelinde came of an old Albanian race; and, moved with pity, wept to behold a warrior of such high courage and birth reduced to such exceeding misery. Enjoining her maidens to secrecy, she provided him with food and raiment, and concerted means for his escape into Greece. The unfortunate Amadeo was grateful, and, touched with her generosity, swore on the cross that he would forgive the visconte for all the persecutions to which he had subjected him. That night he retired to rest in peace, beneath the roof of his deadliest enemy.

"Long exhaustion caused a deep slumber to sink upon his eyelids, and he heard not the clang of hoofs and the clash of steel ringing in the wide quadrangle, announcing that Santugo had returned, flushed with victory and triumph, his sword reeking with the blood of the revolters. Theodelinde rushed forth to meet her husband, and their meeting was one of joy; her tears of happiness fell on the steel corslet of the stern visconte, and he too rejoiced, for the Spanish king had promised to bestow upon him all the possessions of Amadeo, if, before the festival of the Annunciation, which was but three days distant, he placed the Wolf's head on the high altar of St. Eufemio.

"The gentle viscontessa knew not of this bloody compact, but presuming on the joy and tenderness displayed by her husband, and shrinking from aught that resembled duplicity, she led him to the chamber of Amadeo. He was reposing on a stately couch, and fitfully the beams of the night-lamp fell on his pale forehead and noble features. He started, awoke, and saw —what? Theodelinde by his bed-side, with her stern husband clad in complete armour. Santugo, his barred visor up, regarded him with a lowering visage; while he grasped a heavy zagaglia, such as our estradiots used of old, and which glittered deadly, like the eyes of him who held it. Then Theodelinde knew, by the glare of that terrible eye, that Amadeo was lost, and she sank upon her knees.

"'O pity him and spare him for my sake; spare him, if you love me, my husband.'

"But the ruthless Alfieri heard her not—saw her not; he beheld only the aggrandisement of his power, and hearkened only to the whisperings of avarice and enmity. Amadeo leaped up, but his foe was too swift for him. Hurled with equal force and dexterity, the zagaglia flew hissing from Santugo's hand, and its broad, barbed head cleft the skull, and lay quivering in the brain of Amadeo. Theodelinde sank down on the floor in horror; while the visconte cut off the head with his poinard, and knitting the locks to his baldrick, galloped to the church of St. Eufemio, where he flung the gory trophy on the altar. The ghastly skull remained there, on a carved stone bracket, for half a century; until the cathedral of St. Eufemio was destroyed, on the anniversary of the deed, by the earthquake of 1638. Those who viewed its fall beheld a spectacle which was beyond description terrible! The earth yawned, and the stately church with its three tall, taper spires; its pinnacles, rich with Gothic carving; its windows, sparkling with light and gorgeous with tracery; its massive battlements and echoing aisles, sank slowly into the flaming abyss,—down, down, until the gilded cross on the tallest pinnacle vanished. Convents, stately palaces, and streets sank down with it, and where St. Eufemio stood, there lay a vast, black, fetid lake, rolling its dark sulphurous waves in the light of the summer moon. Ho! ho! what a tomb for the skull of the Wolf!

"The Guelfi were landless outcasts, until, by the treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, Naples passed away from Spanish domination; and, under Charles of Parma, my father recovered the old possessions of our house; now, in imitation of Amadeo, I am ready for revolt; and, with every chance of success, to-morrow shall unroll the banner of Joseph of Naples, whom Madonna bless! To-morrow, let the Alfieri and loyalists beware: I will not spare even the linnet in the cage, or the dog that sleeps on the hearth. Drink, Scarolla, to the Signora Bianca, who by to-morrow eve will be hailed as the gay capitanessa!"

But Scarolla heard him not: his head had fallen forward on his breast, and long ere the host's story was concluded, he was snoring with the force of a trombone.

CHAPTER XLIX.

HAPPINESS.

By daybreak next morning we were clear of the castello; for we quitted its walls while its ruffian inmates were buried in slumber. I was happy when the ladies were mounted, and once more on the road, having been under considerable apprehension for their safety; dreading, perhaps, our detention as royalist prisoners in the barone's residence.

"A rough night the last for a march, signor," said I to Captain Gismondo, whom we found parading the Calabri in the street of Amato.

"A tempest, signor! the blue glare of the lightning alone revealed to us that foaming river which we forded, the water rising to our waist-belts; and the rain that rushed down from heaven was every drop large enough to beat in our drum-heads."

Ordering the company to march by a solitary and long-forgotten road towards St. Eufemio, I informed Gismondo and my fair charge of the diabolical plan laid by the barone and his revolters to destroy the villa, and assign the innocent Bianca to the wretch Scarolla, as the price of his co-operation. Her sisters shrieked with terror, and old Battista gave me a stern smile while laying his hand on his sword.

"I know a path across the mountains, signor;" I travelled it once to Monteleone: my little daughter was with me then;" he sighed deeply. "By Ave Maria this evening, our good friends the Alfieri will have a hundred and fifty bayonets at their disposal. Compagna, threes right, quick march," and we moved off with rapidity.

Marching by the most retired roads, we made a circuit among the mountains, to deceive the barone, if any of his scouts should have followed us. The evening sun was casting the long shadows of the lofty hills of Nicastro across the woods and valleys of St. Eufemio, the waters of the bay were rolling in their usual varied tints of sparkling blue, and the eve was so calm and still, that the dash of the lonely breakers, as they flowed on the sandy beach, was heard many miles from the shore, mingling

with the solemn hymn of the Sicilian mariners, and the crews of those picturesque feluccas which spread their striped latteen sails to the breezes of the strait.

Leaving Gismondo with his company to follow, I pushed on with the ladies at full gallop towards the villa; they were both expert horsewomen, and quite outstripped me, as we flew along the sandy marino. Their merry laughter and taunting cries of "Fi! fi! signor capitano," were very galling to me, for I was considered the best horseman (except Lascelles) on the Sicilian staff, and had twice won the regimental and brigade cup at the Palermitan races.

"On my honour! ladies, if I held the reins of my brave English grey, instead of those of a chubby Calabrian horse, you would not have distanced me thus," said I, when they halted to let me come up with them.

The battery erected by the soldiers of Sir Louis de Watteville was now abandoned and demolished; the cannon were away, and the platforms overgrown with luxuriant grass. How stirringly my time had passed since the morning when our army landed on the beach close by!

The moment we rode into the quadrangle of the villa, the clattering hoofs roused the whole household, as the blast of a trumpet would have done. To be brief,—great was the joy diffused by our arrival. We disturbed the old viscontessa from cards, with which she was rapidly gaining from old Adriano all the ducats she had paid at confessional an hour before, for peccadilloes. The young visconte, pale, and worn with long illness of mind and body, received the trembling Francesca to his arms as if she had been restored to him from the tomb. The Italians are peculiarly excitable, and his transports were wild in the extreme. He had expected to behold his bride no more, and now she was hanging on his bosom, free, happy, and more beautiful than ever. As I had long foreseen, he placed in my hand that of his blushing cousin, Bianca, while the venerable viscontessa wept and prayed with joy, scattered a handful of cards and counters over us, in her confusion, and embraced us by turns. The whole household, male and female, from Andronicus the chasseur, to the little ragazzo who turned the spits, joined in a general chorus of joy; they commenced the furious tarantella in

the quadrangle, and the whole mansion rang with shouts, which were soon to be changed for those of a less agreeable nature.

Around the white neck of Bianca, I threw the riband with the gold medal, presented to me by Cardinal York, whose kindness had restored Francesca to light and life, and the sweet girl kissed it, promising to treasure it, for his sake and mine. She appeared so beautiful, so blooming, and happy, as she hung upon my shoulder, in the recess of a lofty window, with the light of the western sky streaming on her bright curls and glittering dress, and Santugo seemed so much absorbed in the presence of her sister, who was seated between him and his mother, with a hand clasped fondly by each, that I was loath to disturb the happy group, and blight their general joy, by speaking of Guelfo; but the appearance of Gismondo's company marching along the marino, and the advanced hour of the evening, made it imperative that arrangements should be made for fighting or flying. All changed colour when I mentioned Castelguelfo: Santugo's brow grew black, and his mother burst into tears.

"O, Luigi! to remain would be madness, when Giacomo and all our people are serving as soldiers at Reggio!" she exclaimed.

"It ill beseems you, signora, to counsel me to my dishonour," replied the fierce young man, with singular hauteur, while his lip quivered, and his dark eyes shone with fire. "Like all the family of Amato, Dionisio is a coward at heart, and a rebel Buonapartist; and shall I, who am esteemed among the bravest and most patriotic of our noblesse, fly before a base leaguer with banditti? Never! With Gismondo's Calabri, and the armed men I can collect on an hour's notice, to the last will I defend my father-house, fighting from chamber to chamber, and story to story, and die, rather than yield, even should Guelfo involve the whole fabric in flames and destruction."

"Ammirando!" exclaimed Gismondo, entering, "you speak as I expected to hear the son of my old comrade, whose honours you will never tarnish. Courage, ladies! One hundred and fifty bayonets are here, under my orders; and, with Madonna's blessing, and our own hands, the Wolf may fall into as great a snare as old Amadeo did in the days of poor Campanella."

The viscontessa shuddered, but her son took down his sword from the wall.

"Dundas," said he, "to you, who are a soldier of greater experience than any here (not even excepting our old guerilla, Gismondo), I look principally for advice during this night's uproar. Come, signor, leave Bianca, and loosen your sabre in its sheath. Ladies, away to your mandolins and embroidery, or to ave and credo; your presence alone unmans me. Olà, Zaccheo! where the devil is my old courier tarrying now? Bolt and barricade every door and window, and muster and arm the valets. Even the little ragazzo must handle a musket to-night."

"Had we not better send a horseman to the Royal Reggitore of Nicastro, for aid?"

"An insolent Sicilian dog!" replied Santugo. "No, no; we must trust to Heaven and our own bravery."

Land and ocean had grown dark, or what is deemed so in fair Ausonia. The bright stars studding the whole firmament, and the pale silver moon rising over the dark green ridges of the wooded hills, shed their mystic light on cape and bay over Amato's frowning rocks and flowing river, illuminating the tall round tower, the broad façade, and many arcades of the Villa d'Alfieri, and bathing in silver the orange-woods around it.

Before the hour of the projected attack, we had all prepared for defence, and our arrangements had been made for a vigorous one: every door, window, and aperture, were strongly barred and barricaded; piles of furniture, statues, cushions, ottomans, massive tomes from the library, and everything suitable, were pressed into the service,—forming barriers in the passages and on stair-landings, in case of an assault. Ere midnight tolled from the sonorous old clock in the quadrangle, all the ladies and their attendants were stowed away in the attic story, and one hundred and eighty men were stationed at the different posts assigned them below. Gismondo commanded one wing of the mansion; his lieutenant and Alfiero, two cavaliers of the house of Bisignano, the other; while Santugo and myself occupied the centre.

The soldiers were so well posted, that the different approaches to the villa were completely enfiladed, while that by the quadrangle would be exposed to a deadly cross-fire from fifty windows. In this order, we awaited the revolters.

On making my rounds, to see that all were on the alert, I visited the ladies, who, in the attic story of the old round tower, were quite secure from musketry. The old viscontessa was on her knees, praying; she had relinquished her cards for "The Litanies of our Blessed Lady," and a crowd of female domestics knelt around her. Bianca and her sisters were clustered together, with arms entwined, like three beautiful graces, but looking pale and terrified, awaiting the strife with beating hearts and eyes suffused with tears.

"Dearest Claude!" said she whose gentle voice I loved best, "for God's sake! O, for my sake! do not expose yourself heedlessly to danger."

"Courage, dear one," said I, putting an arm playfully round her, "we must all fight like the Trojans of old. Think of what will be the fate of us all,—of yourself, in particular,—if Guelfo and his ruffian compeers capture the villa to-night. If I can put a bullet into the head of this new suitor, Scarolla—Tush, Bianca! ridiculous,—is it not?" She made a sickly attempt to smile, but bowed her head on my shoulder, and wept. I heard Santugo and his chasseur uttering my name, and calling aloud through various parts of the mansion, but I was too agreeably occupied to attend to them just then.

"Allerta!" cried Gismondo; and, knowing the military warning, I hurried away to the scene of action.

"See you the rascals, signor?" said he, pointing from a barricaded window to a dark mass moving along the distant roadway, and rapidly debouching into the lawn. They marched in the full glare of the moonlight, and the gleam of steel flashed incessantly from the shapeless column. They carried two standards, and one was a tricolour.

"Some of those Jacobin dogs are the iron-miners of Stilo: they have long been stubborn traitors," said Santugo, in accents of rage.

"And bold Scarolla, so long the scourge of Frenchmen, why leagues he with villains such as these?"

"You forgot, signor," replied the young lord, with a grim smile, "that he is either to gain a noble bride, or an ounce-bullet to-night."

CHAPTER L.

THE VILLA BESIEGED.

"TROMBADORE, sound the alert!" cried I, to the little Calabrian trumpeter. The sharp blast of his brass instrument awoke every echo of the great villa; there was a clatter of accoutrements, a clashing of bayonets and buckles, a hum, and all became still as the grave. We now heard the tread of the advancing force, which divided into two bodies,—one to assault the house in front, the other in flank. A red light shot up between the trees of the avenue, as an earnest of what was to ensue: the gate-lodge had been given to the flames.

A steep sloping terrace, enclosed by a high balustrade, encircled the whole villa: six iron wickets, leading to the lawn and garden, had been well secured, and this outer defence formed our first barrier against the foe, who advanced within a few yards of it, before I ordered the trumpeter to sound again. At the first note, a volley, which the assailants little expected, was poured upon them, throwing them into the utmost confusion, and driving them back with slaughter. They replied with promptitude, and poor old Gismondo fell dead by my side. My blood now got heated in earnest.

"Bravissimo soldateria!" I cried, to the Free Calabri, while brandishing my sabre, and hurrying from post to post, to animate their resistance: "level low, and fire where they are thickest." The roar of the musketry stirred all the echoes of the vast, resounding building: its long corridors, lofty saloons, and domed ceilings, gave back the reports with redoubled force; every place was filled with smoke, without and within: every window and aperture was streaked with fire, bristling with bright steel bayonets, and swarming with dark, fierce visages.

Our fire made frightful havoc among the revolters, who numbered above a thousand, all keen for plunder, infuriated by unexpected opposition, and maddened by wine, drunk in the various houses and cellars they had pillaged on their march: their yells were like those of wild beasts or savages.

The sbirri, or feudal gens-d'armes, who wore the barone's livery, were lost among the dense rabble of barefooted

miners from Stilo, grim charcoal-burners, and Scarolla's squalid banditti. A revolting array of hideous faces, I beheld moving beneath me in the moonlight, distorted by every malignant and evil passion, and flushed with wine, fury, and inborn ferocity. In the blaze of their brandished torches, glittered weapons of every description, from the pike twelve feet long, to the short spadetto and knife of Bastia. Onward they rushed, a mighty mass of ferocity and filth; and again they were repulsed, leaving the quadrangle strewn with killed and wounded.

"Viva Giuseppe! superba!" cried a shrill, quavering voice: it was that of the barone, whom we now saw heading a third attack in person, whilst a strong party, making a lodgment under the portico, assailed the grand entrance with crowbars and levers. The colonnade protected them from our fire, and the massy framework of the door was fast yielding to the blows of pickaxes and hammers, with which the strong-armed miners assailed it, whilst their courage increased as the barrier gradually gave way before their strenuous efforts. At last, a tremendous shout announced that an aperture was made; upon which, I ordered the barricades of the vestibule to be strengthened, and lined by a double rank of soldiers, intrusting their command to the young Alfiero Caraffa.

The fire of the besiegers had now reduced our force to about eighty effective men; and my anxiety for the safety of the villa and its inmates increased with the wounds and deaths around me. The whole terrace on the land-side was lined with marksmen, who knelt behind the stone balusters, and fired between them with deadly precision at the large upper windows; through which the white uniforms and gay trappings of the Royal Calabrians were distinctly visible in the moonlight. I dreaded the continuation of this deadly fire more than a close assault; and, to increase my anxiety, Andronicus, who acted as our commissary, came with a most lugubrious visage to inform me that the ammunition was becoming expended, and that the pouches of the Free Calabri were almost empty.

"God! we are lost, then!" I exclaimed; this information fell upon me like a thunderbolt. I hurried to Santugo, whom I found kneeling, rifle in hand, before a narrow loophole, endeavouring to discover the little barone, the

main-spring of this revolt, whom it was no easy task to perceive, among such a rabble, although we heard his croaking voice and chuckling laugh every moment.

"Superba! viva Giuseppe Buonaparté! *viva la Capitanessa Scarolla!*" The banditti answered by a yell of delight. "On, on, brave rogues;" he added, "we will have two pieces of cannon here in an hour."

"Cannon!" I reiterated, and exchanged glances with Santugo. We were both astounded by the intelligence.

"O, Claude!" said my friend, "I tremble only for my mother, for Francesca, and her sisters. For myself, per Baccho! you know I would fight, without a tremor, till roof and rafters, column and cupola, fell in ruins above me. Is all lost, then?"

"No," said I, speaking through my hand; for the noise of the conflict was deafening; "we may save the villa yet, and all its inmates; but a bold dash must be made. Look yonder! what see you?"

"I understand—the task is mine."

"*Mine*, rather."

"No, no, Signor Claude, I have Francesca at stake."

"And I, Bianca—we are equal."

"I care not. Olà, Andronicus! saddle my cavallo Barbero, and look well to girth and holster—quick, away, Signor Greco!"

"What we saw was the British fleet, consisting of a gigantic ship of the line and three or four frigates and corvettes, standing slowly down the straits of the Pharo, and keeping close in shore, attracted, probably, by the sound of the firing. I knew the flag-ship of Sir Sidney Smith, by its old-fashioned poop-lantern; and my project was to despatch a messenger on board, craving help. But how could one leave the villa? it was environed on one side by surf and steep rocks, shelving down to a whirlpool; on the other, by fierce assailants, who were merciless as the yawning sea.

Desperate was the venture; but that it must be attempted, we knew was imperative. A friendly contest ensued between us and the two Cavalieri Caraffa, each insisting on being the executor of the dangerous service. We contested the point so long, that it was at last referred to a throw of dice: the lot fell on Luigi, who prepared at once for the deadly mission, by divesting himself of his

mantle, buttoning his short velvet surtout closely about him, and taking in three holes of his sword-belt; while I hurriedly indited the following note to the admiral.

"Villa d'Alfieri, Sept. 20th, 1808.

"SIR,—I have the honour to request that you will order as strong a detachment of seamen or marines as you may deem necessary, to be landed at the villa of the Alfieri, which is closely besieged by the baron of Castelguelfo, a Buonapartist, who is now at the head of a numerous force of Italian rebels. To protect the loyal family of the bearer, the visconte di Santugo, I placed in the villa a company of the Free Corps, and have already to regret the loss of Captain Battista Gismondo, and nearly sixty rank and file. Our case is desperate. The villa will not be tenable one hour longer, as the barone (whom Regnier has supplied with all munition of war) is bringing two pieces of cannon against it, and our cartridges are totally expended.

"I have the honour, &c. &c.

"CLAUDE DUNDAS, Capt. 62nd regt."

"Admiral Sir SIDNEY SMITH,

"H.M. ship *Pompey*."

According to the fashion of many large Italian houses, the stables formed a part of the principal building; and so, in the present emergency, it was lucky that the horses were at hand. Santugo's black Barbary horse, with its red, quivering nostrils, eyes sparkling fire, and its mane bristling at the noise of the musketry, was led by the Greek chasseur through a long corridor to a saloon which overlooked the grottos by the sea-shore. The saddled steed was an unusual visitor in that noble apartment, where statues, vases, pictures, and sofas, were piled up in confusion, to form barricades before six tall windows which faced the straits. One was open, revealing the bright sky, the sparkling sea, Sicilia's coast, and the sailing fleet; while ten Calabri, with their bayonets at the charge, stood by, to guard the aperture.

The brave young noble mounted, and, stooping as he passed out, guided his horse along a ledge of slippery rock, and the casement was immediately secured behind him. We watched him with equal anxiety and admiration, as he rode along the perilous path, where one false

step of the Barbary would have plunged him in the whirlpool, which roared and sucked in the foaming eddies, beneath the villa walls. The instant he passed the angle of the building, which was swept by the fire of the assailants, there burst from them a simultaneous yell, which was answered by a shout of reckless defiance from the daring Santugo, who, driving spurs into his fleet horse, compelled it to clear the high balustraded terrace by a flying leap. Then his long sword flashed in the moonlight as he slashed right and left, crying—"Viva Carolina! Ferdinando nostro e la Santa Fede!" cutting his way through the yelling mass, escaping bullet and steel as if he had a charmed life; he passed through them and was free, and I had no doubt would gain the village (where the boats lay) safely and rapidly.

Enraged at his escape, the revolters pressed on with renewed fury, but changed their mode of attack. A cloud now passed over the moon, involving the scenery in comparative darkness; but it was soon to be illuminated in a manner I little expected.

There flashed forth a sudden glare of light, revealing the sea of ferocious visages and glancing arms of the enemy, the bloody terrace heaped with dead, the dark arcades, carved cornices, and lofty portico of the villa: a lurid glare shone over everything, and a man advanced to the terrace holding aloft an Indian sky-rocket, a terrible species of firework, often used by the French. Its yellow blaze fell full upon the face of the bearer, in whom I recognized the villanous engineer, Navarro; I snatched a musket from the hand of a dead soldier, but ere it was aimed, the traitor had shot the fiery missile from his hand and disappeared.

This terrible instrument of eastern warfare forced itself forward, roaring and blazing towards the villa, and, breaking through a window, plunged about as if instinct with life, setting fire to everything inflammatory within its reach. From its size and weight, and the formation of its sides, which were bristling with spikes, it finally stuck fast to the flooring of a room, where its power of combustion increased every instant, and a succession of reports burst from it as its fire-balls flew off in every direction. All fled in dismay, to avoid being blown up by the sparks falling into their pouches, scorched to death by remaining in its vicinity, shot by its bullets, or stabbed by

the spikes, which it shot forth incessantly, like quills from a "fretful porcupine."

In vain I cried for water; no one heard me; the diabolical engine bounded, roared, and hissed like a very devil, involving us in noisome and suffocating smoke; and in three minutes the magnificent villa was in flames, and its defenders paralyzed.

"Superba!" cried the barone. "Viva Giuseppe!" and the triumphant yells of his enraged followers redoubled. I turned to the Cavalieri Caraffa.

"Gentlemen, keep your soldiers at their posts to the last," said I, "while I provide for the retreat of the ladies."

"How, signor!" asked Andronicus; "on every hand they environ us, save the seaward, where a whirlpool—O, omnipotente!"

At that moment, we heard the report of a cannon; a round shot passed through the great door, demolishing in its passage a beautiful fountain of marble and bronze, and the water flowed in a torrent over the tesselated pavement, while musketry was discharged in quick succession through the breach. To augment our distress, the barone's guns had come up; and the triumphant cries, the ferocity and daring of the assailants, increased as the hot flames grew apace around us. Shrieks now burst from the summit of the round tower: overwhelmed with anxiety and rage, and faint with the heat and smoke of the fire-arms and conflagration, I hurried up the great staircase to bring away the females, who could not remain five minutes longer: but where or how I was to convey them, Heaven only knew!

The moon, which had been obscured for some time, now shone forth with renewed lustre, and I saw the sea brightening like a silver flood, as the last clouds passed away from the shining orb. O, sight of joy! Three large boats filled with marines and seamen were at that moment pulled close under the rocks, to which they had advanced unseen by the foe. The headmost had already disappeared in the sea grottos: and I heard the measured clank of the rowlocks, and saw the oar-blades of the sternmost barge flash like blue fire, as they were feathered in true man-o'-war style. The boats shot under the rocks, like arrows; one moment the glittering moon poured its cold light on the glazed caps and bristling bayonets

of the closely-packed marines — on the bright pike-heads, the gleaming cutlasses, and little tarpaulins of the seamen—and the next, it shone on the lonely, seething ocean.

"Saved, thank heaven!" I exclaimed, rushing down the stair. "Bravo, soldateria! fight on, brave Calabri, for aid is near. Hollo, Zaccheo! throw open the windows to the back, and bring down the ladies, before the fire reaches the upper stories. Hollo, signor trombadore! sound the *rally*, my brave little man!"

The poor boy was so terrified, that his trumpet-call was only a feeble squeak; but the survivors of the company, about fifty in number, rushed from all quarters to the spot. A volley of musketry announced that our marines had opened on the assailants.

"Let us sally out—away with the barricades!" cried Lieutenant Caraffa, and we rushed forth with charged bayonets, eager to revenge the slaughter and devastation of the night. The regular fire of a hundred marines from the terrace—to which Santugo led them by a secret passage from the grottos below—threw the revolters into a panic, and their discomfiture was completed by a strong detachment of seamen, headed by Hanfield, the gallant captain of the *Delight*, whom Sir Sidney had sent in command of the expedition. Rushing over the lawn with a wild hurrah, they fell slashing and thrusting with cutlass and pike among the recoiling rabble of the barone, who, abandoning their two six-pounder guns, fled *en masse*, with rapidity; but fighting every step of the way towards the mountains, and firing on us from behind every bush and rock which afforded momentary concealment. In the pursuit, I encountered the formidable Scarolla, who fired both his pistols at me without effect, as I rushed upon him with my sabre; clubbing his rifle, he swung it round his head with a force sufficiently formidable, but, watching an opportunity when he overstruck himself, I sabred him above the left eye, and beat him to the ground, when some of his followers made a rally and carried him off.

"Viva Giuseppe!" cried a well-known voice close by me, and looking round, I beheld the little author of all the mischief struggling in the grasp of a seaman, whom, by his embroidered anchors, I recognized as boatswain of the *Delight*. He was not much taller than his antagonist,

the barone, but strong and thickset, with the chest and shoulders of an ox; an ample sunburnt visage, surmounted by a little glazed hat, and fringed by a circular beard of black wiry hair below, his cheek distended by a quid, and an enormous pig-tail reaching below his waist-belt, made him seem a very formidable antagonist to Guelfo, whom he had knocked down, and over whom he was flourishing his heavy cutlass, squirting a little tobacco-juice into his eyes from time to time.

"Maladetto!" growled the Italian lord, "O, povero voi, Signor Marinero!"

"Avast, old Gingerbread! I speak none of your foreign lingos," replied the boatswain.

Flushed with rage and disappointment, the barone struggled furiously with his strong antagonist, who held him at arm's length, in doubt whether to cleave him down or let him go, till Zaccheo, the Greek, approached, and, ere I could interfere, ended the matter, by driving his couteau-de-chasse through the heart of Guelfo, who expired without a groan.

By daybreak, the fighting was over. A poor little midshipman and several seamen were killed; a hundred of our mad assailants lay dead in the quadrangle, and as many more round the terrace. In the villa, half its garrison lay killed or wounded around the windows, from which the flames and smoke rolled forth in mighty volumes; many were roasted or consumed before we could remove them; poor old Gismondo with the rest. Hanfield ordered his men to save the villa from further destruction; but the flames had gathered such force, that for a time every effort seemed fruitless. Assisted by three boats' crews from the flag-ship, they pulled down a part of the mansion, and turned the water of the *jets d'eau* on the rest, to prevent the fire (which was confined to one wing), from spreading to the main building. After an hour of toil and danger, during which I worked away in my shirt-sleeves until I was as black as a charcoal-burner, the flames were suppressed; but how changed was the aspect of the once splendid villa!

One portion of the building was roofless and ruined; its lofty casements shattered, its corbelled balconies, tall pillars, and rich Corinthian entablatures, scorched by fire, and blackened by smoke; the ravaged gardens and ter-

races were strewn with corpses, the halls, saloons, and corridors, encumbered with the same ghastly objects, splashed with blood, and filled with confusion and destruction ; pier-glasses, vases, and statues were dashed to pieces ; hangings and pictures rent and torn. The quiet library and elegant boudoir rang with the cries of the wounded, or the reckless merriment of the sailors, who caroused on the richest wines. But Santugo looked around him with the most perfect *sang froid.*

Twenty prisoners we had captured were sent over to Palermo, where they expiated their revolt in the horrible dungeons of the Damusi,—the most frightful, perhaps, in the world, where their bones are probably lying at this hour.

CHAPTER LI.

THE NUPTIALS.

When the fight was over, the fire extinguished, and the dead all interred, I repaired to the grotto, where the ladies and their attendants were shivering with terror, and the cold air of the sea, which every instant threw a shower of sparkling spray into the damp vaults. A statue to St. Hugh, before which three dim tapers were always burning, gave a picturesque aspect to the natural grotto, and a rill of limpid water, at which the saint had quenched his thirst, gurgled from the rocks into a rich font of white marble. Around this little shrine the females were clustered ; and a cry burst from them when I approached in my unseemly garb, spotted with blood, blackened by powder, smoke, and toil, and plastered over with clay, as if I had been dipped in the mud-baths of Abano.

The carriage was brought ; the horses of the ladies were saddled, and they left the half-ruined villa with a strong escort, to take up a temporary residence at the castle of Angistola, the property of the duke of Bagnara, near Pizzo. After seeing the remains of the Calabrian company embarked for Messina in our gun-boats, I, accompanied by Santugo, followed the ladies at full gallop, leaving the old chasseur to act as commandant at the villa. I despatched a mounted servant to Scylla, for some of my baggage, a suit of uniform especially, as my harness was quite ridiculous in the gay *salons* of the duchess.

At Angistola, the ladies soon recovered from their terror and fatigue; the beauty of the scenery, where the steep Apennines sloped down to the gulf of St. Eufemio, covered with dark pines or orange-trees, and the deep-wooded dell through which the river wound, seemed gloomy, solemn, and picturesque. The duke of Bagnara held a military command at a distance, but his fair *duchessa*, who was one of the reigning beauties of the Sicilian court, received us with every honour and kindness.

A few days after our arrival, we had the castello filled with milliners from Palermo, and the ladies were constantly clustered in deep consultation around the duchess, in her boudoir; the visconte was joyous and gay—a *fête* was evidently approaching; he was about to espouse his cousin, with all the splendour that wealth could yield, and the imposing pomp of the Catholic Church impart: and (to be brief) I found myself on the same happy footing with my dear little Bianca, without the portentous question having been asked. It was all quite understood; we had made no secret of our mutual attachment, which was revealed by every gentle word and tender glance. Our marriage was the earnest wish of Santugo and the viscontessa; and as for her principal relative, the withered little prince of St. Agata, as the girl was without a ducat, he cared not a straw who became her husband.

The day before the auspicious one, old Frà Adriano came jogging up to the castello, on his ambling mule, in the execution of his office as family confessor, to confess us all, according to the Italian custom, before marriage. To this I objected, first with a joke, and then gravely, much to the horror of the reverend friar; he turned up his eyes, and muttering, "Ahi! eretico!" went in search of Bianca, who confessed to him—heaven knows what! So innocent a being could have nothing to reveal, save her own happiness and joy.

Adriano had scarcely left me, when I saw a serjeant, in the welcome and well-known uniform of my own regiment, ascending the steep avenue to the castle porch.

"What can be the matter now?" thought I, and at such a time—the deuce! "Well, Gask, what news from the corps, and what has brought you here?" said I, as he entered the room, and stood straight as his half-pike, which he held advanced. "Take a chair, man," I added, with that kind familiarity with which an officer ought

always to greet a soldier of his own regiment in a strange place.

"Sir, I have brought a letter from Sir John Stuart. Being on my way to join the garrison at Scylla castle, he sent me over in a gun-boat from Messina, that I might deliver this, which he was anxious you should receive without delay."

I tore open the note. It ran thus :—

"*Messina, Tuesday Morning.*

"DEAR DUNDAS,—Join your garrison at Scylla, without a moment's delay ; General Sherbrooke threatens to supersede you, and order you to join the 'Wiltshire,' at Syracuse, as he understands that you attend more to the ladies than his majesty's service. Massena and Regnier are concentrating forces in Upper Calabria ; the chiefs of the Masse are wavering, and you may expect more broken heads by Christmas. Adieu! I start for London to-morrow.

"I am, &c. &c.,

"J. STUART, Major-General."

"So, Gask, you are bound for Scylla?" said I, glad the note contained only a friendly hint.

"Yes, sir."

"You will go with me, as it is unsafe for you to travel alone in such a country as this. I set out the day after to-morrow."

"I am much obliged to you, sir, for your forethought. Do we march by daybreak?"

"No, no," I answered, laughing ; "that would scarcely suit ; but retire with the chamberlain, who will order you a luncheon, and tell you news."

Though pleased with Sir John's friendly attention, I could very well have dispensed with the presence of my countryman, the serjeant, who was a true-blue Presbyterian from the Howe of Fife, an ardent worshipper of Eben Erskine, and one, consequently, who would look with pious horror on the popish ceremonies of the morrow, which there was no doubt he would witness, with the household of the castello.

Poor Gask! He was a worthy and good soldier, for whom the whole corps had a sincere respect. Educated for our stern Scottish kirk, some misfortunes in early life forced him into the ranks, where his superior attain-

ments and classical education made him a marvel among the Wiltshire men, and gained him three stripes, although it could do nothing more, the quiet tenor of his way being the reverse of the smart drill corporal or bustling serjeant-major, who looks forward to the post of adjutant. He was the beau-ideal of a Scottish soldier—grave, intelligent, and steady; and was seldom seen, unless book in hand, reading in some retired nook, when his comrades were roystering in the canteen or sutler's tent. Poor Gask! this page is the only tribute to your memory.

Next day, the marriages were celebrated with great pomp in the church of St. Eufemio, at Nicastro; that of the visconte and Francesca took place first, and was followed by that of Bianca and myself. A new uniform coat was quite spoiled by the holy water, which the bishop sprinkled over us very liberally; and my white "regimental breeches" were totally ruined by the rough mosaic of the church, when I advanced on my knees, with a lighted candle in one hand, to present bread and wine to the bishop, while old Adriano waved the stole over us, according to the usage of the land.

"Ah! if any of our mess could see me just now, how the rogues would laugh," thought I, while scrambling along the aisle, with the hot wax dropping on my fingers from the confounded taper, which I did not hold so gracefully as Bianca held hers. Grand as the ceremony was, I disliked so much of it, and dreaded to encounter the cold smile and smirking face of Serjeant Gask, who stood, upright as a pike, among the kneeling domestics.

We were glad when the bishop concluded the ritual, the fundamental part of which was simple enough; but I could very well have dispensed with all that Italian superstition had added to it; yet I behaved with such decorum, that the bishop believed me as stanch a Catholic as ever kissed cross, and fain would gentle Bianca have thought me so too. The moment we left the altar, a bright circle of young ladies clustered round her, covering her with kisses, while the people shouted, "O giorno felice! Viva il capitano! Viva la capitanessa!"

All blessed her, and muttered, "Bell' Idolo!" as she passed forth; indeed, she appeared as enchanting as beauty of the most delicate caste, the richest attire, and most splendid diamonds could make her, and if always lovely, even in the plainest garb, imagine how she must have

shone in her magnificent bridal dress, when her eyes beamed with delight, and her soft cheek turned alternately deep red and deadly pale, as the blood came and went with the varying thoughts that agitated her—awe and modesty, love and exultation.

"Giorno felice, indeed!" thought I, and, springing into the carriage beside her, we drove off for the castello, as fast as four galloping horses could take us. The sonorous organ, the chanting priests, the ringing bells, the shouts, and discharge of fire-arms, died away behind us, and accompanied by a gay cavalcade of the fairest and noblest in the province, our marriage train swept through the solitary vale of the Angistola, at full speed, towards the castle, where a lordly *fête* awaited us, and from the tall windows of its hall a blaze of light was shed on the darkening scenery and winding river as we rode up the gloomy avenue.

CHAPTER LII.

THE TEMPEST.—THE LAST OF THE HUNCHBACK.

Leaving Santugo and his bride with the duchess, we set out next day for Scylla: our calesso having an escort, without which, it was impossible to travel in such a country. Gask occupied the rumble, beside Annina, while a chasseur, with ten sbirri, sent by the duchess, rode five in front and five in the rear; their leader riding some hundred yards in advance. All these men wore the duke's livery; they were well mounted, and armed with carbines, sabres, and pistols. The calesso was furnished with a loop-hole, opening under the rumble, through which I could blaze away with my pistols, in case of having to retreat skirmishing.

The scenery was now beginning to assume the brown warm tints of autumn, but the savage mountain gorges, the deep woods, the winding shore, and beetling cliffs, through which the road lay, were not less beautiful than when I passed them before with poor Castelermo. The ramparts of Monteleone, the bosky forest of Burello, the silver windings of Metramo, the famous vineyards of Rossarno and Gioja were all passed rapidly; and, plunging

down into the wilderness, between the Apennines and the sea, we had accomplished half our journey, when a tremendous storm overtook us.

Our hearts were so full of happiness, and each was so much absorbed in the presence of the other, that we marked not the flight of time; and though our carriage rolled on through the most beautiful scenery of that wild province, we bestowed scarce a glance or a thought upon it. Yet we conversed very little, for an overwhelming sense of happiness had quite subdued Bianca's vivacity.

I deemed myself the luckiest member of our Calabrian army. Hundreds had come only to find a tomb on the plains of Maida, before the ramparts of Crotona, or in the trenches of Scylla. A few had gained a step of promotion and a little honour; the general a great deal—the title of count; and, from the city of London, a substantial dinner at the Mansion-house, with the present of a splendid sword; but I had gained Bianca d'Alfieri, who had, last season, turned half the heads in Palermo. "Bravo Claude!" thought I; "it is quite a regimental triumph, and deserves to be borne on our colours. At Syracuse, the mess will drink deep when they hear of it."

The darkening of the sky, across the azure surface of which dense columns of cloud were moving in rapid succession, and the exhalation of a chilly vapour and malaria from the stagnant pools of a dismal swamp, in which we suddenly became entangled, all foreboded a coming storm. The sea, when seen at intervals between the opening hills, was black as ink, and fleckered with masses of foam. Vessels were making all snug aloft, and getting close under the lee of the shore, to avoid the threatened tempest, which was soon to sweep over the bosom of the trackless ocean. The rumbling of the carriage and the hoofs of our galloping escort sounded deep and hollow between the echoing hills.

"Signor," said their decurione or chasseur, riding up to the window, which I had let down for the admission of air, "in three minutes we shall have a tremendous storm, —perhaps la capitanessa would wish to seek a place of safety."

"But where?"

"Madonna only knows, excellency. The earth shakes, the air is thick. I am an old man, and remember with dread when last I saw such signs. Fly to the shore—the

sea may engulf you; to the hills—they may fall down, and overwhelm you; to the plains—and the solid earth may yawn beneath your feet."

"Pleasant!" I said, considerably startled; "what do you advise—to seek Seminara? The spire of the Greek cathedral rises yonder, above the pine-woods and vapour of the marshes."

"No, signor, we are safer on the mountains or in the marshes: here let us remain, and trust to Madonna for protection."

"In God alone is all my trust!" said the Scottish serjeant, whose knowledge of Latin enabled him to understand the sbirro; but as for your Madonna——" he snapped his fingers, without concluding.

The blackness was increasing fast, and we sought the shelter offered by a thick pine-wood to escape the pelting rain, which rushed down in a torrent, every drop larger than a pistol-bullet. As it would have been unsoldier-like to remain in the calesso while our escort were exposed to the storm, I passed the time under the trees, rolled up in my military cloak, after securing the carriage-doors, to protect Bianca and her attendant, who drew their veils close, to shut out the flashes of vivid lightning which every instant illumined the darkest dingles of the forest. A terrible noise, such as I had never heard before, rumbled in the earth and air. I looked to the sbirro; he was crossing himself and muttering an ave, while a sour Presbyterian smile curled the lips of Gask, who leaned on his pike beside him. The chasseur, or decurione, ordered the horses to be unharnessed from the carriage, and I had soon reason to thank him sincerely for his forethought.

We saw the flames of distant Etna casting a light across the western sky, but, in every other direction, the heavens were involved in gloom, or dark grey twilight. The whole atmosphere, however, soon began to assume an aspect so fiery, that over Seminara the dense clouds seemed as if rolling in flames, and we beheld the tall façade of the Greek abbey, the dark mountains, and the arches of a ruined aqueduct between them, standing in bold outline and strong relief on the red and luminous background. The scene was wild and magnificent; but the drenching rain, and the roaring wind, which shook the strongest pines like ostrich feathers, and almost blew us away with the branches, leaves, and stones, which it swept over the

waste, the sulphureous state of the atmosphere, and the ground trembling beneath our feet, made us feel, altogether, too uncomfortable to enjoy the splendid aspect of the heavens and earth agitated by such a storm.

It was truly Calabrian! Our horses snorted and pranced, their manes bristled, their prominent eyes shot fire, and it required all our efforts to calm them, and keep them from breaking the bridle-reins, which we had buckled to trees. Suddenly, a most appalling clap of thunder burst over our heads, like the broadside of a fleet. A lofty and precipitous cliff of volcanic rock, which reared up its rugged front not far from us, heaved and reeled, like some mighty animal convulsed with agony: shaken to the base by some tremendous subterranean throe, it rocked visibly, and the foliage on its summit was tossed, like raven plumage on a hearse, by the motion.

Anon, a cry of dismay burst from the sbirri. An enormous mass became detached from the highest peak; rolling from its perpendicular front, and rebounding from cliff to cliff, it came thundering into the plain below, bringing with it a mighty ruin of shattered stones, dust, trees, and soil, which fell like the fragments of a mountain, and with a force that shook the ground we stood on. The crash was deafening: a storm of leaves, small stones, and dust flew past us, and, for a minute, the air was fearfully dense, gloomy, and palpable. I reeled, and clung to the carriage-wheels for support; Bianca swooned; Gask was praying devoutly, with his grenadier-cap off, and the sbirri muttered their aves aloud: above us, the thunder rolled on from peak to peak, and the lightning shot between them, while the air grew darker and more sulphureous.

Terrified by the shaken rock and the bursting thunderbolts, our fiery horses became mad: they foamed, snorted, plunged, and kicked fire from the stones; the four that were unharnessed from the calesso, broke loose, and fled, at full speed, towards Seminara, pursued by the decurione and his sbirri, who were eager to save them: they were noble bays, and favourites of the duchess. Thus the serjeant and I were left alone, standing by the calesso.

"Ghieu, ho! ho!" cried a croaking voice in the thicket. I heard a chuckling laugh; and a figure, rolled up like a

ball, making a summerset over the rocks and stones, lighted close by my feet. "Buon giorno, Signor Capitano! he, he! ho, ho! fine evening, eh?"

Like a gigantic toad, Gaspare Truffi stood before me, with his long matted hair waving over his frightful visage, his torn cassock revealing a leathern baldrick, furnished with pistols, poniard, and horn. Like the very demon of the storm, he whooped and yelled. A broad-leaved hat, of the largest size, overshadowing his figure like an umbrella, gave a peculiarly droll effect to his aspect.

"A delightful evening!" he croaked; "how does our Calabrian weather agree with your stomach, Signor Inglese? Ill, I think, to judge from that lugubrious visage of thine. Olà, Lancelloti! come hither and behold the good padre confessor, who came so devoutly to worm a story out of you in the bishop's vaults: he, he! ho, ho! Feel you how the ground shakes?" he added, stamping his shapeless feet on the quaking turf; "feel you how earth and air tremble? Ammirando! there is a rebellion in hell,—for our good friend, the devil, is gone to the witch-tree at Benevento to-night: ha, ha!"

"Beard of Mahomet!" cried a distant voice, "where are you, cursed crookback?" and at that moment I saw my friend of the vaults advancing towards us, clad in the usual brigand costume, with malice in his eye, and a cocked rifle in his hand. Other figures, like dim ghosts, appeared through the dark misty vapour that floated round us, and I knew that we had fallen in with a party of banditti.

"Come on, comrades," cried Truffi; "here is a calesso, containing, I doubt not, the Signora Bianca, whom we all know of. Viva! a prize worth a thousand scudi!" He advanced to the door of the carriage, but, with the butt of his pike, Gask dealt him a blow which levelled him on the turf. Uttering a yell, he rushed like a lion upon his assailant, who, not expecting so vigorous an onset from a figure so decrepit, was taken completely by surprise, and deprived of his weapon, which Truffi snapped like a reed, rending the tough ash-pole to threads with his sharp teeth and long bony fingers.

He drew his stiletto; and I, narrowly escaping a rifle-shot from Lancelloti, closed with the hideous dwarf, whose insulting demeanour had roused both my hatred and anxiety.

Though once before, in a personal struggle, I had obtained convincing proof of his wondrous strength, I disdained to use my sabre against him, but, striking the poniard from his hand, endeavoured to hurl him to the earth, by grasping his leather girdle. In vain! his short bandy legs upheld his shapeless body, like pillars of steel, while his strong and ample hands grasped me like grappling-irons.

Lancelloti advanced with his clubbed rifle, but Gask assailed him with his sword, and I was left to deal with Truffi alone. I heard the cries of Bianca during the lulls of the storm, and my anxiety was great: the sbirri had all disappeared, the misty figures were rapidly increasing in form and number, and shouts rang through the echoing wood. At this most critical moment, when engaged in a desperate struggle, the earth shook under our feet, and a sensation, like an electric shock, shot over every nerve. We paused, and glared fiercely at each other.

Again, there was a rumbling in the lurid air above, and the quivering earth beneath,—yet we relaxed not our vice-like grasp. What a moment it was! The shaking rocks, the waving trees, and the whole country around us, were torn by one of those mighty convulsions so common to the Calabrias.

Never shall I forget my sensations when, within a yard of where we struggled, the earth gaped and rent, showing an awful chasm, about twenty feet wide: my heart forgot to beat—my blood curdled! From the gap, there arose a thin sulphury light, illuminating the trees above, and the distant dingles of the wood, shining on the wet trunks and glistening leaves; showers of sparks and columns of smoke arose from it, with balls of ignited matter, which hissed in succession as they rose and fell, or exploded among the wet foliage of the forest. Beautiful was its aspect, when illuminated by the mysterious yellow glare of that smoky chasm, and I saw the distorted form of Truffi, in strong outline, between it and me. I felt his grasp tightening: we were near the gulf, and I read his hellish purpose in the twinkling of his red, hollow eyes. Gathering all my strength for one tremendous effort,—great beyond my hopes,—I flung him from me into the flaming chasm, but the shock threw me prostrate on the turf. I leaped up: Truffi had vanished in that appalling grave, which was

now closing rapidly, and soon shut altogether; the sparks and ignited matter arose no more, and the wood became involved in double gloom.

Dismayed at the horrible living tomb which had so suddenly engulfed the hunchback, Lancelloti shrank back, and I leaned against the carriage, overcome with my own emotions. The wind was dying away—the heavy pine-branches hung down motionless. One voice alone broke the stillness,—it was that of the Scottish serjeant, who prayed devoutly. Though as brave a fellow as ever drew sword, he was terrified at that moment.

We soon heard the galloping of hoofs, and the decurione, with the ten sbirri, came back, upon which Lancelloti and his company disappeared, and we saw them no more that night.

"The carriage-horses?" I inquired.

"O, signor! they have all rushed over the cliffs of Palmi, and perished in the sea," replied the breathless sbirro.

"Bianca!" I exclaimed, "O God, what a fate you have escaped! Signor decurione, never can I sufficiently reward you, for desiring the horses to be unharnessed so soon!" I shook the hand of the sbirro, while my heart sank, at the contemplation of what might have happened.

It was long ere Bianca recovered from the horrors of that night,—which, indeed, were such as might have shaken a stouter heart than that of the gentle Italian girl.

We reached Seminara with great difficulty, dragging the calesso by the saddle-horses; but, on obtaining mules at the Greek abbey, we again set out for Scylla, *viâ* Bagnara, where, soon afterwards, I had a sharp encounter with the voltigeurs of the 23rd regiment (French).

CHAPTER LIII.

A MILITARY HONEYMOON.

On the day after assuming my command at Scylla, I ordered out the little garrison in heavy marching order, and found it to consist of picked young fellows of my own regiment, 250 file, with five officers. This small party, with the garrisons at Reggio and Crotona, Amanthea and Monteleone, formed the whole force left in Calabria, with orders to defend their several posts to the last extremity. The last four places were held by Italians alone.

I found that every means had been taken to render the famous rock, and the stronghold of the race of Ruffo, yet more impregnable. In place of the princely cardinal's banner, our gaudy union spread its scarlet folds to the wind, the mighty breach—to me the scene of an adventure never, never to be forgotten—was now closed up, and a strong stone bastion, surmounted by six iron twenty-four-pounders, frowned grimly in its stead.

We were often visited by Santugo and his bride; he belonged to the Reggio garrison, which was commanded by the prince of St. Agata. My brother officers were all agreeable men, and the time passed very pleasantly. Bianca's residence shed quite a halo over the formal barrack and rugged castello, which was enlivened by a continual round of fair visitors from Fiumara, Reggio, and the neighbouring villas. Those gay subs who had looked forward with repugnance to detachment duty in the gloomy castle of Cardinal Ruffo, became delighted with the station and the gaiety of the entertainments. The towers rang perpetually with the dulcet voices of Italian girls, the twangling of mandolins, or the notes of the piano. Every evening, the hall—where the ambitious cardinal had formed his deep-laid schemes of political intrigue, where his mailed ancestors had drunk "the red wine through the helmet barred," and where the Norman knight and Saracen emir had met hand-to-hand in deadly strife—was the scene of a waltz or quadrille party, or rang to the mad and merry tarantella, the modern remnant of the ancient bacchanalian dance. Never, since the days

of Faunus, Saturn's fabled son, Ausonia's oldest king, had the rock of Scylla witnessed such a continuance of festivity.

Amid this joyous career, we had all a narrow escape from malice and treason.

One evening, Gask appeared with a very long face, and informed me that the castle well had been poisoned, for the purpose of destroying us all. Twenty men lay sick in hospital, and a cry of rage went through the whole castle.

"Poisoned—O, lord!" cried Gascoigne, who was with me at the time, and snatching up a decanter of brandy, he nearly drained it at one gulp. Gask had seen a man in the garb of the Compagnia di Morti prowling about the margin of the well, whom we had no doubt was the perpetrator of the villany. While I was making inquiries and despatching parties in pursuit of him, Oliver Lascelles entered my room with a drawing in his hand.

Oliver was an artist, and a complete enthusiast in Italian scenery, and still more so in Italian women; every moment stolen from duty, was devoted to the pencil, and many of his warmly-tinted sketches, done in a masterly manner, are at this moment in my portfolio. I have often admired his coolness, when, under a heavy fire, he has seated himself to sketch the enemy's position, a striking ruin, a fallen column, or piece of ancient sculpture, from which his sword had scraped the moss.

"Behold a portrait of our friend of the Compagnia di Morti," said he, displaying his drawing. "I saw the rogue seated by the fountain, and admiring his picturesque costume, and his striking countenance, with well-knit brows, the eyes deep set in the head, and having that determined scowl which is esteemed so classic, I gave the fellow a ducat to sit; so here you have his features fairly done in crayon."

"The scoundrel! they are those of Navarro, the Italian engineer, who deserted to the French, after assassinating the Maltese knight, in mistake for me. He is no doubt employed by Massena as a spy upon us. By heaven, Lascelles, if I had the rascal here I think I could pistol him this instant!"

"That would make a spirited sketch, too; but he cannot be far off, and Gask, with his party, will probably capture him."

I resolved to hold a drum-head court-martial on him the moment he fell into our hands, and promised twenty guineas to his capturer. But we saw him no more, for a time, at least; and, to prevent such attempts in future, I placed a sentinel at the fountain, which, after a time, became purified. Macnesia's skill saved the twenty soldiers, who were brought almost to the brink of the grave; they had all narrowly escaped death, as a quantity of acquetta was found in the water, when Macnesia analyzed it.

To expatiate on the happiness I enjoyed at Scylla, would be too common-place, and I have a great press of other matter to relate. Rumours of Massena's advance from Cassano, and the retreat and dispersion of the chiefs of the Masse, spread dismay through all the lower province, and roused us from our short dream of pleasure. All families of rank again returned to Palermo, but a few spirited cavaliers retired to the savage fastnesses of the hills, where the brave paesani and wild banditti made common cause against the invader. The arrival of a detachment of the royal artillery, brought from Messina, by the *Delight*, and a despatch from Major-General Sherbrooke, directing me to "defend Scylla, while one stone stood upon another," caused me to make the most strenuous preparations for a vigorous resistance, being anxious to render myself worthy of the important trust reposed in me—the defence of the key of the Italian Peninsula.

The presence of Bianca was the only damper to my ardour, for I anticipated with dread the dangers to which she would be exposed, when the coming strife closed around us; but to my earnest entreaties that she would join her aunt and the young viscontessa, who had retired to Carolina's court at Palermo, she answered only by her tears and entreaties, that I would not send her away, but permit her to share all the perils to which I might be exposed. Poor girl! little knew she of war, and the manifold horrors of a protracted siege, or a fortress carried by assault; but to resist her charming entreaties was impossible, and my anxiety increased as the distance between us and the enemy lessened. How marriage spoils the *ésprit du corps!* Every officer and private of the 62nd looked forward with ardour and hope, and I felt the old reckless spirit rising, notwithstanding the fears that oppressed me.

The daily arrival of couriers from the Masse, and from the armed cavalieri on the mountains, the telegraphing of despatches to and fro with Messina, the hourly training of soldiers at the batteries, the visiting of guards, which were doubled at night, and all the eternal hubbub created by the near approach of the foe, kept me fully occupied; and never, even when tenanted by the martial cardinal, had Scylla witnessed such military bustle and excitement.

Advices soon reached us, that General Regnier had invested the castle of Crotona, which, after a bold defence by the Free Calabri, had been compelled to capitulate, when the heavy battering-train of the French opened on its decayed fortifications. All Naples was exasperated by the intelligence, that the gallant Cavaliere del Castagno had been hanged as a traitor, by orders of Regnier, whose forces, eager to revenge the triumph of Maida, marched rapidly by the shores of the Adriatic; they crossed the mountains at Francavilla, fighting every inch of the way with the Masse, and the bold comrades of Francatripa, Frà Diavolo, Benincasa, and Mammone, and reached Monteleone, which the Italians abandoned, and once more the tricolour of the Buonapartists was triumphantly hoisted on its ramparts.

CHAPTER LIV.

WRECK OF THE "DELIGHT."

Towards the end of December, the French had pushed forward as far as Seminara, and, by the concentration of troops, and a train of heavy ordnance at that place, I had no doubt that preparations were making to besiege the castle of Scylla. Every exertion was made by the loyalists to prevent the carriage of cannon into that corner of Calabria; working-parties of soldiers and armed peasants were continually employed in trenching and barricading the roads, and rendering the passes of the Solano impracticable, thus making every approach down from the hills of Milia as difficult as possible.

Along these heights and passes, I stationed strong bodies of armed Calabrese, intrusting the defence of the

Solano to the Cavaliere di Casteluccio, who, since his escape, had distinguished himself on a thousand occasions; so miraculous were his adventures, that the superstitious provincials believed he had been rendered bullet-proof by the witches of Amato. But so overwhelming was the force of Regnier, that all attempts to bar the passage of his train proved, ultimately, unavailing.

On the last day of that eventful year, the glitter of arms and the pale white smoke of musketry were seen spreading over the Milia hills, between the peaks of which the morning sun poured down his strong and ruddy light on the scene of contest. The drums beat, and we got under arms. Our Calabrian out-piquets and fatigue-parties were driven down from the mountains by three battalions of French infantry, led by General Milette, and were pursued by four squadrons of hussars, until close under cover of our twenty-four-pounders.

Regnier was now in complete possession of those important heights, and *his* working-parties were daily and nightly employed in repairing or forming roads for the conveyance of their battering-train from Seminara. Their operations were retarded and rendered perilous by the incessant attacks of the followers of Casteluccio and Francatripa; but a damper was given to our zeal by the surrender of a numerous garrison at Reggio, where an Italian force, under the prince of St. Agata, capitulated, after a brief resistance. The castle of St. Amanthea, a property of the prince di Bisignano, was captured by assault, after a desperate defence, by the gay Captain Piozzi; he was slain by a cannon-ball, and thus the fair and fickle Despina was once more left a widow. On—on pressed the foe. The banner of Ferdinand IV. had sunk from every rampart in Calabria, save the solitary stronghold of Scylla. We found ourselves alone, and could hope for little from resistance, as all the forces of Massena were pouring southward, with orders to capture it, at every risk of life and expense of blood.

Every night the sky was streaked with fire, showing where Favazina, Fiumara, San Batello, and many a hamlet were given to the flames, after being ravaged by the foragers of the enemy, and every breeze bore past us the cries of slaughtered men, and the shrieks of miserable women.

The fall of Reggio was first announced to us by seeing Santugo's battalion of the Calabri retreating upon Scylla, in solid square, pursued by cavalry, and galled by three curricle-guns, which followed them at a gallop, and were discharged from every eminence that afforded an opportunity of sending a shot into the retiring column; on its arrival, it occupied the half-ruined town below us.

Shortly afterwards, four Sicilian gun-boats, each carrying a twenty-four-pounder in its bow, were captured by the enemy, close by Scylla; and these cannon were landed, and added to the train against the fortress. The moment it was known they had fallen into Regnier's hands, the *Delight* sloop of war, commanded by Captain Hanfield, stood close in shore, to recapture them, and we watched her operations, from the ramparts, with the greatest interest.

Although the last day of December, it was a beautiful evening, and the golden Straits were gleaming in the light of the setting sun, then verging through a sky of the purest azure, towards the green and lofty mountains which rise behind the spires and towers of Messina. The French beached the gun-boats in succession; and, covered by field-pieces and surrounded by squadrons of cavalry, we feared the sailors of the *Delight* would never cut them out or destroy them. Protected by the ship's broadside, three well-armed boats put off from her, and pulled shoreward, with the gallant intention of spiking the gun-boats' artillery, at all risks.

Fire flashed incessantly from the red port-holes of the *Delight*, and the white smoke of her cannon, rising through her taut rigging in fantastic curls, rolled away over the still bosom of the glassy Straits. The shot of the French field-pieces fell in a shower round her advancing boats; and wherever a ball plunged into the bright ocean, a pillar of liquid, like a water-spout, reared into the air with a hollow roar. A dozen of those crystal columns shot up their foamy heads at every moment, as the sailors pulled steadily towards the beach. In the headmost boat waved a large union-jack; and beside it, in the stern-sheets, sat Hanfield, waving his sword and cheering on his men. Close in his wake came the other boats, crowded with red and blue jackets, and glittering with boarding-pikes, bayonets, and cutlasses; while the glistenine blades of the feathered oars flashed like silver

in the sunlight, as they rose and fell in measured time, shooting the swift boats onward.

Crowding on the ramparts, the 62nd cheered, and threw their caps into the air. A response arose from the deck of the distant sloop, when lo! a most unlooked-for misfortune took place. Scylla, that place of horror and mystery to the ancient mariner, and before whose "yawning dungeon" Æneas and Ulysses quailed with terror, was still fraught with danger. Under a press of canvas, the *Delight* sailed obliquely, to keep company with her boats; there was a stiff breeze blowing straight from Sicily, and she stood close along shore, with every inch of her snowy canvas filled, when we beheld her shaken by a tremendous shock; her stately masts shook like willow wands, her long pendant fluttered, her broad sails shivered in the breeze, and she careened suddenly over. An exclamation burst from every lip.

"Ashore!" cried the soldiers, with sorrow and dismay, as her tall fore-topmast fell overboard; the main and the mizen followed it with a hideous crash; the beautiful vessel, which a moment before had been sailing so smoothly and swan-like, so trimly and saucily, lay a dismasted wreck, bulged on a sunken rock within a few furlongs of the beach, with her lee-guns buried in the water, and all her seamen and marines who were not floundering in the wreck around her, clinging to her windward bulwarks.

A triumphant *vivat!* burst from the enemy, who plied their field-pieces with redoubled ardour; and a cry, loud, fierce, and hoarse, answered from the English boats. The oarsmen paused, and the utmost confusion took place; there seemed a doubt whether to advance to the attack, or return to the assistance of their drowning messmates. Exasperated by the wreck of his dashing vessel, and filled with a desire for vengeance, the gallant Hanfield (an officer of great professional knowledge, and high individual worth) ordered the boats to advance, but his efforts were fruitless. His craft were soon crippled by the French cannon-shot and grape, which killed or wounded the majority of his force before it came near the Sicilian prizes. Hanfield, with many of his sailors, was killed, and Captain Seccombe, of the *Glatton* frigate, who happened to be on board the *Delight*, received a severe wound, of which he died a few days after. The boats'

crews were all captured; and those men on the wreck went off in two remaining boats, to save themselves from the same fate. To prevent Regnier from using the cannon remaining in the *Delight*, in prosecution of the siege, the moment it was dark enough, I left the sea-staircase, in a boat, with ten soldiers, and setting fire to the vessel, burned her to the water's edge; so ended this catastrophe, which shed a gloom over us all for some time.

CHAPTER LV.

THE VOLTIGEURS.—THE MASSACRE OF BAGNARA.

Il Cavaliere di Casteluccio, some of whose followers still hovered about the Solano, having sent me accurate information of the position and arrangement of Regnier's outpost at Bagnara—the point nearest to us in his possession, and held by the voltigeurs of the 23rd (French) light infantry—I concerted a plan to form a junction with the cavaliere's Free Company, and cut off that detachment, as the castle had been quite blocked up on every side since Regnier had pushed his advanced parties as far south as Bagnara and Favazina.

On a misty night in the month of February, an hour after tattoo-beat, I marched out one hundred rank and file (more, indeed, than could be spared from my small garrison), and was joined by three times that number of the Free Calabri, led by Santugo. Guided by the distant watchfires of General Milette's piquets, which formed a fiery chain along the Milia heights, we moved by the most unfrequented paths and gorges; the last were numerous enough, as the whole country bore traces of that terrible convulsion of nature, which, twenty-four years before, engulfed Bagnara and three thousand of its inhabitants. Hideous scaurs and chasms rent in the sandstone rocks and salt-hills, together with the banks of vapour exhaled from the marshes, completely screened our movements from the enemy, scattered parties of whom watched the operations of the banditti and the Masse (a force now rapidly melting away), who were apt at all times to beat up their quarters. The system of perpetual harassing was vigorously maintained, to prevent the forma-

tion of roads for the conveyance of their battering-train towards the scene of the intended siege.

After a time, the night became so dark that the visconte was doubtful which was the way, as the dense vapour rolling down from the mountains cast a double gloom over everything. Opening the door of a wretched hut, I found an old crone, who dealt in spells and love-potions, spreading her shrivelled hands over the expiring embers of a few dried sticks.

"Beware, excellency, the hag is a sorceress!" said Giacomo, as I entered.

"Signora," said I, unheeding his caution, "we are in want of a guide to the olive-wood of Bagnara; can you procure us one for the service of Ferdinand and la Santa Fede?"

I glanced at her son, or grandson, a boy about fifteen, a model of that bloom and symmetry so common in the youth of Spain and Italy; he was almost naked, or clad only in skins. "Go thou, Pablo," said the crone.

"Ahi! madre," said he, shrinking back, "like my father, I may be shot by the French."

"Via—away!" she replied, sternly. The strict filial obedience exacted by the ancients yet existed in these remote provinces; so, taking his knife and pole, the youth at once prepared to accompany us.

Guided by him, we reached the neighbourhood of Bagnara about midnight, and halted in an olive-wood, situated on an eminence above the town; it was then reduced to a few cottages, occupied by the voltigeurs, who had taken all the usual means to render their post as strong as possible, by loop-holing the walls, to enfilade the approaches, and barricading the ends of the little street with trees, furniture, brushwood, and banks of earth.

"Chi è là?" cried a sonorous voice from the wood, as we entered it.

"*Italia*," answered the first file of our advanced guard, and the Cavaliere di Casteluccio rode up at the head of his company of volunteers, all bold athletic fellows, armed with rifles and poniards, and carrying their ammunition in leather pouches or large buffalo-horns.

Below us, in Bagnara, all was still; the poor doomed soldiers slept soundly; not a light twinkled, not a sound broke the silence, save the rustle of the leafless trees, or the dash of the lonely sea as it rolled on the shingly

beach. At times a red light shot across the sky to the westward; it rose from the peak of Stromboli, in the distant isles of Æolus. We held a council in the olive-grove, before advancing.

"Signor Casteluccio, be so good," said I, "as to describe the enemy's post."

"The voltigeurs are six hundred strong, and commanded by a Colonel Pepe ——"

"Any relation of Don Pepe?" asked the visconte, laughing.

"A tall, lantern-jawed fellow, with a scar over the left eye," said the cavaliere.

"The same," said I: "we have met before."

"He occupies the house of the podestà, a stone building, well loop-holed and barricaded; the approach to it is defended by three twelve-pounders, which sweep the principal street, and are always loaded with round and tin-case shot. A hundred voltigeurs garrison the house; the others are quartered in those adjoining; and the defensive arrangements are such, that they can all act in concert, and, like a star-fort, the post gives a cross fire at every angle."

"The safest approach?"

"Is from the seaward. There a deep rut leads directly from the shore to the town; thick foliage overhangs it, under which we can advance unseen. A single sentinel guards the point—the night is dark—you comprehend me?" added the cavaliere, smiling grimly, as he touched one of those villanous stilettoes, which his countrymen were never without.

"Ay, Signor Paolo," I replied; "once in, we will do very well; but as the voltigeurs sleep with their muskets loaded and their belts on, they will start to arms the moment the sentinel fires his piece."

"But he must be disposed of," said Santugo, coolly. "Giacomo!"

His factotum appeared immediately.

"A French sentinel occupies the ravine, through which we must advance undiscovered. He must not fire: you will see to this, as you value life."

Giacomo bowed intelligently, and was withdrawing, when the voice of Gascoigne arrested him.

"You murdering villain, come here! what the devil—will you permit this piece of rascality, Dundas?"

"Assuredly not!" said I, dismounting from Cartouche.

"I am an English officer, and not an assassin!" said Lascelles, in great wrath.

"You have both only anticipated me," I replied, "Santugo, we cannot permit the poor soldier to be slain in a manner so dastardly. No! I would rather advance under the hottest fire of musketry, than consent to it; my own soldiers at least will follow me." A murmur of assent rose from the 62nd.

"Cospetto!" exclaimed Santugo, impatiently; "and to save the life of this paltry voltigeur, who will perhaps be shot afterwards, you may sacrifice all our lives and the success of the expedition."

"I understand the scruples of our friends," replied Casteluccio; "and will undertake that, in ten minutes, Signor Dundas will have the voltigeur beside him, safe and sound; unless, indeed, he makes a great resistance; in which case, I cannot assure you of my being very patient."

In three columns we moved to the attack. Santugo with his corps marched on one flank of the post; the cavaliere, with his Free Company, on the other; with my hundred men, I chose the central point of assault by the gorge; and the report of the first volley was to be the signal for the onset. Luckily for us, a thick white vapour, rolling from the sea, enveloped all Bagnara, veiling our movements completely; the enemy had not the remotest suspicion of our vicinity. My soldiers were in light marching order, with sixty rounds of ammunition. We went down the hill double quick, and entered the gorge softly, in sections of threes. Casteluccio accompanied us, to seize the sentinel; but I had little reliance to place on the successful fulfilment of his promise.

"The sentinel once captured, we will rush upon them like a herd of wolves; and the massacre of Bagnara shall live in Calabrian story, like the Sicilian vespers of old!" said the cavaliere, in a low, hoarse tone. His eyes sparkled; he drew his poniard, and stole from my side towards the unsuspecting voltigeur, whom we discerned about fifty yards from where my party halted. Under the shade of a foliaged cliff, he stood motionless, with his musket ordered, and his eyes bent on the ground. His voice alone broke the intense stillness of his post, and had he been less occupied with his own thoughts, he must undoubtedly have

seen us; but the mind of the poor Swiss conscript was perhaps far away where his mother's vine-clad chalet looked down on the vales and cataracts of his native canton. Sadly and slowly he hummed the pastoral "*Ranz des vaches*," and saw not the foe, who, crouching like a lynx, with one hand on his lip and the other on his weapon, stole softly towards him. I waited the issue with anxiety.

"Silenzio!" exclaimed the strong cavalier, in a fierce whisper, as he grasped the sentry by the throat. The poor Swiss boy (for he was but a boy, after all) understood not the word; but the sudden stifling grasp, and the sight of the glittering bastia poniard, almost deprived him of his faculties; taken completely by surprise, he dropped his musket, and was dragged among us, a prisoner.

"Signor, I have redeemed my promise," said the breathless Paolo. "May this be an omen of what is to follow!" He sprang up the rugged face of the gorge to rejoin his party, while mine moved forward double quick. Leading the way, sabre in hand, I scrambled over a bank of earth, a strong wicket in which led to the guard-house. We were provided with sledge-hammers, and the noise of breaking it down brought out the guard: they fired, and two soldiers fell dead beside me; we answered by a volley, and the whole cantonment was alarmed in a moment. With the charged bayonet and clubbed musket, we rushed upon the guard, which we overwhelmed and captured in a moment.

"Lascelles, take twenty men, and beat down the Seminara gate: Santugo will enter that way. Off, double quick!"

The surprise was so complete, that the resistance we encountered on every hand was faint: the guards were overpowered, the avenues beaten open, and the fierce followers of the visconte and Cavaliere Paolo spread like a pack of famished hounds over the little town; slaying all they met, without mercy or remorse.

The party occupying the podesteria gave us more trouble than we had expected. I saw Colonel Pepe, in his shirt and trousers, rush from the door to the three field-pieces, which he discharged in rapid succession, and their canister shot did terrible execution among the dense column of Calabrians rushing up the street. Ere he regained the door, a shot from a rifle arrested him; he tossed his arms wildly above his head, and then fell backwards a corpse.

The entrance was closed and barricaded, and a close and destructive fire was opened from every window, and those countless loop-holes with which the walls had been hastily perforated: flashes, smoke, and half-naked men were seen at every aperture; and the gleams of the musketry illuminated the whole place.

Aware that not a moment was to be lost, as the cavalry at Seminara or the piquets of Milette would be all under arms at the sound of the first shot, I resolved that a vigorous attempt should be made to storm the podestà's house, which, from its size and strength, had become the principal keep or stronghold of the enemy. Desiring Gascoigne, with a suitable party, to collect as many prisoners as possible, I led forward my own immediate command. Our approach was completely enfiladed by the adjoining houses, from which the French poured forth a fire with such destructive precision and rapidity, that in a few minutes the street presented a horrible spectacle, being heaped with killed and wounded, whose blood crimsoned the gutters on both sides of the way. Directing Santugo to assail the house in rear, Casteluccio and I led on a mixed force of British and Calabri; but so terrible was the leaden hail the French showered on three sides of us, that we were repulsed with immense slaughter: the cavaliere received a severe wound in the sword-arm; yet he quitted not the ground, but brandishing his sabre with his left hand, continued to animate his followers by his presence and cries of "Viva Ferdinand IV!"

Again I led forward the remnant of my party, and again we were forced to recoil, but succeeded in bringing off one of the curricle-guns; with a wild shout of triumph it was wheeled round, double shotted, and discharged against the house.

"Hurrah!" cried I, almost frantic with excitement, ramming home another ball with my own hand. "Bravo! Gask, keep your hand tight on the vent—ready the match—stand clear of the recoil—fire!" and again it belched forth destruction. Thrice it was fired, and thrice the shot struck the same place; an enormous rent yawned in the wall, and a mass of masonry fell to the earth: yet the French fought with undiminished courage. The side of a room had been completely breached.

"Forward the 62nd! Advance the Calabri! On them with the bayonet—charge—hurrah!" Animated by my

example, and, notwithstanding the deadly fire poured on them from every part, onward they went, with that heroic ardour which soon after swept the armies of Napoleon from the fields of Spain and Flanders. We burst in amongst the voltigeurs, whose diminutive stature placed them at the utmost disadvantage, when opposed to English soldiers and the tall, athletic Calabri in the fierce hand-to-hand combat which ensued. A desperate struggle followed. For a time the podesteria seemed shaken to its base, and in the close *mêlée* I received a severe blow from a clubbed musket: but the voltigeurs yielded themselves prisoners of war in five minutes; and my soldiers immediately encircled them, to protect them from the knives and bayonets of the infuriated Italians.

In the despatch of General Sherbrooke it is mentioned, that "in the night attack on Bagnara, the voltigeurs of the 23rd light infantry were cut to pieces." This was literally the case: so merciless were the Calabrese, that a great number of the poor Frenchmen were slaughtered in their beds (a blanket, a great coat, or a bundle of fern), and no wounded man escaped them. Of Colonel Pepe's 600 voltigeurs, 450 lay, like himself, weltering in blood, in the streets and houses of Bagnara. I did all that man could do, short of assaulting the Calabrians, to stop the horrid slaughter; but my efforts were unavailing, and the blood of these brave men was poured forth like water: the soldiers of the 62nd revolted at such cold-blooded cruelty, and expressed their indignation aloud. The poor remnant of the 23rd were moody and silent, cast down in spirit and pale in visage, ragged and half naked, when I paraded them outside the town, just as the grey daylight brightened the Milia peaks, and the sea began to change its hue from inky grey to sparkling blue, as it rolled on the rocky promontories of Scylla and Palmi. Our casualties were numerous: but one officer, a hundred and fifty rank and file, and three pieces of cannon were the prizes of the night. To gain these, four hundred and fifty of their comrades had been destroyed; and almost in cold blood, too!

CHAPTER LVI.

RETREAT IN SQUARE.—THE PRISONER OF WAR.

Borne on the morning breeze from Seminara, the distant sound of a cavalry trumpet warned us to retire with precipitation. We spiked the guns, blew up the tumbrils, and, setting the town on fire, soon destroyed all of Bagnara that the last earthquake had left unengulfed. Lighted by the red blaze which the burning houses cast on the green hills, the dark pine-woods, and the impending masses of basaltic rock frowning over mountain-streams and deep defiles, we continued our retreat double-quick, without the aid of our little guide, Pablo, who, at sound of the first shot, had vanished, without waiting for his promised reward.

"Hark to the tantara of the trumpets! Milette's cavalry brigade is coming on," said Santugo, checking his black Barbary horse and listening to the distant sound.

As he spoke, French cavalry appeared on the Seminara road, galloping in file along the narrow way by which we were hurrying towards Scylla, whose ramparts we discerned above the morning mist, about three miles off. The rising sun gleamed gaily on the long lines of shining helmets and glancing sabres, as the horsemen swept through the deep dell in close pursuit. The fire of Casteluccio's volunteers, who formed our rear-guard, served to keep them in check for a time, and impede their advance, by the fall of steeds and their riders; but on our debouchement into more open ground, I formed the whole into a compact square, with the prisoners in the centre. The cavalry now pushed on at a furious gallop, and, as they cleared the gorge, the trumpeters sounded in succession "form squadron;" the right files trotted, while the left swept round at full speed; and, the moment each troop formed, it rushed upon us with a force and impetuosity which must have stricken terror into the Calabrese: but the proud troopers recoiled before the levelled bayonets and steady fire of a few brave men of my own corps, who formed the rearward face of the square.

Successively the six squadrons of a whole corps of light cavalry swept after us, and successively they were compelled to break into subdivisions, and retire to the right

and left, round the flanks of their column, while the next in order advanced to the charge. They suffered severely; both horses and riders lay rolling in heaps, while we lost not a man, as the troopers never fired their pistols; probably to spare their countrymen who were our prisoners. Just as a brigade of horse-artillery came at a gallop from the dell, and were wheeled round on an eminence, to open upon us, we gained the shelter of a pine-thicket, and in perfect safety retired leisurely upon Scylla.

Casteluccio's band—whose retreat to their fastnesses in the Solano the advance of Milette's cavalry had completely cut off—I added to the garrison of the town. The wound of the brave cavaliere was severe, and a musket-ball had broken his left arm. Our surgeon, Macnesia, reduced the fracture; but the patient was quite unserviceable, and therefore retired for a time to Messina.

After the transmission of our prisoners and wounded to the same place, in the boats of the *Electra* frigate, I gladly retired to my quarters, where the joy and tenderness of Bianca soon made me forget the excitement and weariness of the past night. That evening the mist, which had all day hovered over land and sea, cleared away, when we plainly saw the French working-parties on the mountains, forming the road from Seminara, under the protection of strong escorts of cavalry and infantry.

Occasionally a puff of white smoke, curling from the brow of a cliff or from a neighbouring thicket, and an immediate commotion among the enemy, announced a sudden shot from a concealed Calabrian rifle, which had struck one from the roll of the soldiers of the empire. Banditti, and broken parties of the Masse, stuck like burrs in the skirts of the French; and the loss of life occasioned by such desultory warfare was immense.

Bianca shuddered as she surveyed the distant foe and glanced at the castle batteries below us, where, in regular order, stood the long lines of iron twenty-fours and thirty-twos, with all the accompaniments of rammers, sponges, and handspikes; pyramids of balls occupying the spaces between. The glittering bayonets shone on every bastion and angle; while the numerous sentinels, and the hourly rounds of the watchful commanders of guards, denoted an alertness and excitement, a vicinity

of warfare, equally appalling and novel to her. Whilst we were watching all these preparations, a little drummer beat the warning for the "evening retreat;" the sharp rattle of his drum agitated Bianca so much, that she burst into tears, and, sinking on my shoulder, exclaimed, "Oh, Claude! would to God we were safe at Palermo! All this is indeed terrible."

"All *this!*" I reiterated. "Faith! Bianca, I see nothing terrible here. The guards on the alert, the cannon in order, the duty carried on strictly, all bespeak the orderly garrison. But if the mere sight of these things and the clatter of that little boy's drum affright you, think what will be your terrors when yonder hill bristles with brigades of cannon, vomiting death and fire; when every point around us glitters with steel, and even the roar of Dragara is lost in that of the conflict; when men are falling like ripe grapes in a storm, and the shot flying thick as hail, rending battlement and tower. Oh! think of all these dangers, dear one; and, once more, let me entreat you—implore you, to retire to Messina. Consent, Bianca; and I will this moment order a gun to fire for the *Electra's* boat."

"And you counsel me to leave you so soon?" said she, bending her soft eyes on mine.

"Your gentle mind cannot conceive the horrors of a siege. Scylla I must defend to the last, for such are my orders; but how long can such a little fortress withstand the mighty army of Massena? Our separation, Bianca, can only be for a time ——"

"Caro Claude, for a time—but how long? You may be taken prisoner and carried to Don Pepe's dungeons in Dalmatia, and I may never see you again. When I think of poor Benedetto's fate—oh, horror! Say no more, Claude; death only shall separate us."

The entrance of Bob Brown or Annina (they now composed our entire household) put an end to this pathetic interview. Bianca smiled through her tears, and looked so beautiful and happy, and love made me so selfish, that I said no more of her retiring to Sicily.

The evening was sunny and still, the air serene, and the sea calm, except around the rock of Scylla. The green Sicilian shore rose up, clearly and distinctly, from the azure ocean, and the sails of the *Amphion*, the *Electra*, the *Glatton*, the *Pompey*, and all our numerous war-ships

which studded the Straits, shone white as snow in the sunbeams; while Sicilian gun-boats, slave-galleys, and xebecques dotted the sea between; the cloudless sky, and the range of hills which terminates at the Faro, formed the background. Our casements were open, and the setting sun poured his bright rays into the castle-hall, the roof of which was covered with the dilapidated frescoes of Matteo Prette, and the faded coats armorial of the princes of Ruffo Scylla. It was a noble relic of other days. Massive Ionic columns of Sicilian marble, with bases of green Corsican jasper, rising from a tesselated floor, supported its arched roof; between these, in niches, were some rare pieces of ancient sculpture, dug from the ruins of the neighbouring Columna Rhegini; or, perhaps, relics of that edifice which Anaxilaus, its prince, first raised on the rock, to defend him against the warriors of Tuscany. The early flowers of a warm Italian spring were blooming in the balconies, and their sweet perfume was wafted around us.

Bianca was seated at work, brocading a piece of scarlet Palmi silk, while I lounged on a sofa, reading the last "Gazetta Britannica;" a silver caraffa of the cardinal's muscadel stood close at hand, and I thought, while knocking the ashes from my third cigar, that my situation on the staff would be a very pleasant one, if Monsieur le Général Regnier contented himself by remaining intrenched at Cassano, instead of beating up my quarters at the extremity of lower Italy.

A smart single knock at the door announced Serjeant Gask.

"Mr. Lascelles has sent me to say, sir, that the officer taken prisoner at Bagnara, who wished to be sent to Dalmatia on parole, appears to be an Italian."

"The rascal!" I exclaimed; "but perhaps he is a Roman, or Venetian."

"He says the last, sir; but I could swear that he is a Calabrian born and bred."

"Bring him here, with a file of the barrier guard, that I may examine him myself."

Gask retired, and in five minutes returned with the prisoner—a sullen and dogged-like fellow, wearing a plain French uniform, blue, with scarlet facings, an aiguillette, and shoulder-scales. He was swarthy, and his lank moustaches gave him a melancholy aspect, while the

rolling of his restless eyes announced that he was very ill at ease.

On his entrance with the escort, Bianca withdrew. Imagine my surprise, on recognizing Pietro Navarro, who grew deadly pale on beholding me.

"Good evening! Signor Navarro," said I; "I did not expect to meet a descendant of the worthy inventor of mines under circumstances so degrading."

"I am Pepe Biada, a Venetian, bearing a commission in the artillery of the emperor. You are making some mistake, signor, and I warn you to beware of reprisals. A heavy brigade of guns is already *en route* for Scylla, which cannot hold out a day against the forces now marching on it—no, San Martino!—not a single day."

"San Marteeno? ha! the true Neapolitan twang, that," I exclaimed. "How many men are moving on this point?"

"Six thousand, exclusive of artillery, horse, and sappers," he answered, gruffly. "I demand, signor, as a Venetian in the service of the king of Italy, that I may be permitted to retire, on my parole of honour." He spoke boldly, and seemed to imagine that his information had staggered me a little.

"You must first be examined by a military court-martial. I have not forgotten that night when you poniarded the brave cavaliere of Malta, in mistake for me. On clearing yourself of that, and several other gross misdemeanours, you will be transmitted to Sicily, to be treated as the government shall deem fit. You will be good enough to hand me your sabretache? Take him away, Gask, and guard him well—he deserves no mercy. Give Captain Gascoigne my compliments—send him here, and desire the orderly drum to beat for orders."

Navarro, finding that his assertions of innocence were made to one who was too well convinced of his guilt, in silence unbuckled his belt, threw it with the sabretache towards me, and retired with his escort. From its bulk and weight, I thought it contained something of importance; but found only an Italian work on engineering, by Donato Rosetta, the canon of Livournia, together with a few sketches of forts and roads. One of these was important enough: it showed the castle of Scylla, with the positions to be occupied by the French cannon; their pro-

posed approaches and trenches were laid down, and our weakest points were marked. This document was a fresh cause for exasperation: from his knowledge of the fortress and its locality, Navarro must have been of the utmost use to General Regnier; and I was determined to bring him to trial without delay. My process was harsh; but let the peculiar nature of my position, the power with which I was vested, and Navarro's crimes, excuse it.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE DRUM-HEAD COURT-MARTIAL.

I PARADED the whole of the little garrison, and ordering a drum-head court to assemble immediately, wrote the charges on which the prisoner was to be arraigned before it: but I was interrupted by an outcry and combat in the guard-house. Snatching the sword from Gask's belt, he had attempted to stab him, and break away by force; but the soldiers beat him down with the butts of their muskets, and he was secured with handcuffs, an iron bar, and a padlock.

Formed in close column, the whole garrison, including the Free Corps of Santugo (who, although their lieutenant-colonel was, oddly enough, under my orders), paraded to hear and behold the proceedings. So exasperated were the Calabri, that the presence of British soldiers alone prevented them from sacrificing the unhappy Navarro, and thus destroying all that judicial form which I meant to give to our proceedings.

In centre of the castle court was placed a drum, with a Bible, pens, ink, and paper, upon it. The president stood on one side, and the members on his right and left hand; Navarro, with his escort, stood opposite. I had to act in the triple capacity of prosecutor, witness, and approver. The paper found attached to the poniard in Castelermo's bosom, the likeness of Navarro, disguised as one of the Compagnia di Morti, together with the contents of his sabretache, I laid before the court for examination.

Brief as the proceedings of such a tribunal always are,

ours were necessarily unusually so: a forward movement was at that moment being made by the French cavalry, and we were pressed for time. The following is a literal transcript of the short and singular document indited by Lascelles on that occasion: it is still in my possession:—

"Proceedings of a drum-head court-martial, held on PIETRO NAVARRO, late of the Sicilian Engineers, by order of Captain DUNDAS, 62nd regiment, Commandant of the Castle of Scylla.

"The court being duly sworn, and having weighed and considered the evidence against the prisoner and his defence, are of opinion that he, Pietro Navarro, is guilty of the following charges:—

"*First.* Of assassinating Marco di Castelermo, a knight commander of Malta, and captain of the Free Corps.

"*Second.* Desertion to the enemy.

"*Third.* Conspiring with rebels to destroy the Villa d'Alfieri.

"*Fourth.* Poisoning the well of H. M. castle of Scylla, and thereby endangering the lives of the garrison.

"*Sentence.* To be shot or hanged, as the commandant shall direct.

"MEMBERS.

"PAT. GASCOIGNE, Capt. 62nd Regt. Pres.
"O. LASCELLES, Lieut. 62nd Regt.
"PELHAM VILLIERS, Lieut. 62nd Regt.
"CONTE D'ARENA, Lieut. Free Corps.
"CONTE DI PALMA, Lieut. Free Corps.

"*Scylla*, Feb. 1808."

To this I affixed my signature, with the fatal words "*confirmed—to be shot.*" Navarro grew pale as death when I laid down the pen; and, as I gave the command, forming the close column into a hollow square, by marching it to the front and wheeling the subdivisions of the central companies outward, he seemed to receive an electric shock. He moved mechanically to the front, when I desired Lascelles, who acted as our adjutant, to read the brief proceedings. So flagrant were his crimes, that to have yielded him one privilege as an officer, was not even

to be thought of, and he was treated in every respect as a private soldier.

Oliver read the proceedings and sentence, first in English, and then in Italian; Navarro listened with dogged silence, knowing well that entreaties were useless if made to the stern military tribunal before which he found himself so suddenly arraigned. His lip quivered, and his brow blanched, when the last words "to be shot," fell upon his ear, and he gave me a dull, inquiring stare, as I folded the paper and thrust it into my sabretache. Though my glance was firm and my voice never quavered, I felt for the poor wretch, undeserving as he was. He hovered on the brink of eternity, and my lips were to utter the command which would at once send him into the presence of his Creator.

Mine—there was something terrible in the idea: I paused for a moment; a beam of hope lightened his gloomy eyes and brow. The place was so still, that one might have heard a pin fall: but delay was cruel.

"Unhappy man!" said I, "you have heard the opinion and sentence of the court. The latter must be carried into execution in twenty minutes, and it would be well to employ that little time in pure repentance, and in solemn prayer."

"O, omnipotente!" he exclaimed, raising up his eyes and fettered hands, "in twenty minutes, can so many years of sin and enormity be repented of? O, San Giovanni, thou, whose most holy order I have outraged! O, San Marco the glorious! Eufemio the martyred! and thou, sweetest Madonna! intercede for me with One whom I am unworthy to address!"

Deeply touched with his tone, I turned to Santugo: but he was too much used to hear such pious ejaculations on every frivolous occasion, to care a straw about them; and, leaning on his sabre, he surveyed the culprit with a stern glance of distrust and contempt.

"Down on your knees, villain!" he exclaimed, "and pray with a will; for I fear you are standing on the brink of eternal damnation!"

"O, horror!" cried Navarro; and, losing all self-possession, he sank on his knees, and began to repeat his pater-noster with great devotion.

"I regret that we have here no priest of the Catholic church to attend you in this terrible hour," said I, "but

yonder is a good and worthy soldier who has once been in holy orders, and if his prayers ——"

"Away!" cried Navarro, as Gask took a Bible from his havresack, and, laying his grenadier cap aside, advanced towards him. "Better a Turk, than a Jew; but, in such an hour as this, better the devil than a heretic! Away, accursed! I spit upon you! I will trust rather to my own prayers than thy intercessions ——"

"I presume not to intercede," said poor Gask, meekly, as he closed the Bible; "I am but an humble soldier, though I have seen better days; and I am a sinner, doubtless, though never committing sin wilfully. I entreat your permission to accompany you in prayer, to soothe your last moments, in such wise that, through the blessed mercy of the Lord of Hosts ——"

"Ghieu, setanasso!" screamed the assassin, quite beside himself; "away, heretic! Better the most ribald monk of Pistoja than such as thee!"

"Fall back, Gask; the man is frantic," said I. "Tell off a section, with their arms loaded; desire the pioneers to dig a grave in the cardinal's bastion, and their corporal to bind up the prisoner's eyes."

Gask saluted, and retired to obey, while the prisoner, covering his face with his fettered hands, appeared to be engaged in the deepest prayer. The men of the 62nd evinced considerable repugnance to become his executioners, such a duty being always reserved as a punishment for bad or disorderly soldiers, and there was not one among them who could be deemed to come under either of these denominations. A whisper circulated through the ranks, and I knew that I was imposing an unpleasant duty upon good men. The visconte divined my dilemma.

"Dundas," said he, "as Italians, let ours be the task to punish this wretch, whom I blush to acknowledge a countryman! Giacomo, take twenty of our corps, and shoot him through the back; but unbind his hands, that he may tell over his beads once more before he dies."

Giacomo selected his marksmen, and drew them up opposite a high wall, before which Navarro knelt, about thirty paces from them. As the Calabrians loaded, two pioneers with a shovel and pickaxe approached; and on seeing them, the prisoner seemed seized with a frenzy. Suddenly he sprang up, and fled towards a parapet-wall with the fleetness of a hare, and a scene of the utmost con-

fusion ensued: shot after shot was fired at him, but missed. It was madness to hope to escape from Scylla, filled as it was with armed men, enclosed on three sides by the surging sea, on the fourth by steep cliffs, and girdled by lofty towers and bastions. Frantic with desperation and terror, the miserable Navarro rushed up the platform of one of the gun-batteries, and swung himself over the parapet, escaping a shower of balls aimed at him by the half-disciplined Calabri, who had all rushed in disorder to the walls: destruction dogged him close. Beneath, the cliff descended sheer to the sea three hundred feet below; above, the parapet bristled with weapons, and was lined with hostile faces. Chilled with a sudden horror, when the dash of the foaming sea and the hollow boom of those tremendous caverns by which the rock is pierced, rang in his ears, he became stunned; and, closing his eyes, clung to a straggling vine, or some creeping plants, with all the stern tenacity that love of life and fear of death inspire. Never shall I forget the expression of his face when I looked over the parapet upon him. It was ghastly as that of a corpse: his short black hair bristled and quivered on his scalp; his deep dark eyes glared with terror, hatred, and ferocity, till they resembled those of a snake; and every muscle of his face was contracted and distorted. He swung in agony over the beetling cliff, on which he endeavoured in vain to obtain a footing; but its face receded from him, and he hung like a mason's plummet.

"Giacomo," said the visconte, "end his misery."

The Calabrian levelled his musket over the breastwork, and his aiming eye, as it glanced along the smooth barrel, met the fixed and agonized glance of Navarro. He fired. The ramparts round us, and the rocks and caves beneath, gave back the reverberated report like thunder. The ball had passed through the brain of Navarro, who vanished from the cliff and was seen no more.

So perished this unhappy traitor.

CHAPTER LVIII.

DIANORA.—THE FORFEITED HAND.

THE exciting affair with Navarro was scarcely over, before we became involved in another; which, though of a different description, caused me no little anxiety: of this, my gay friend, Oliver Lascelles, was the hero.

Oliver was a handsome, good-humoured, light-hearted, curly-headed, thoughtless, young fellow; heir to one of the finest estates in Essex, with a venerable Elizabethan manor-house and deer-park, a stud of horses, and a kennel of hounds. He was a good shot, and a sure stroke at billiards; could push his horse wherever the hounds went, and, when hunting, was never known to *crane* in his life: he would spur, slap-dash over everything; and he always led the field. However, these were but the least of his good qualities: he possessed others, that were of a better order. Oliver was, every inch, an English gentleman and soldier; possessing a refined taste, and more solid acquirements than such as are necessary merely to enable a man to acquit himself in fashionable or military life: for, in truth, a very "shallow fellow" may pass muster, at times, in the ball-room, on parade, or in the hunting-field.

About this time, when Regnier's advance kept us all on the alert, Oliver, as if he had not wherewithal to occupy his thoughts, contrived to fall in love; and, to all appearance, so earnestly, that I was not long in discovering and rallying him about it. People are very prone to fall in love in that land of bright eyes: the little god Cupid is still "king of gods and men," in sunny Ausonia, where love seems to be the principal occupation of the inhabitants.

Though the advanced posts of the enemy were now pretty close to us on all sides, our fiery spark, Lascelles, went forth every evening to visit his innamorata, who dwelt in the neighbourhood of Fiumara, which had now become a French cantonment. I have elsewhere alluded to his artistic talent: he had now conceived a violent fancy for delineating Italian girls in all the glory of ruddy and dimpled cheeks, dark eyes, braided hair, and very scanty

petticoats. His apartments were strewed with such sketches, and Bianca rallied him smartly, on finding that the same pretty face was traceable in every drawing: Oliver had, evidently, one vivid and particular idea ever uppermost in his mind. He had a rival, too—a devil of a fellow—who contrived to infuse an unusual quantum of mystery into this love affair, all the perils of which I will relate to the reader, while our friends, the French, are labouring at the Seminara road, in order to bring up their train of cannon.

"Where away so fast, Oliver?" asked I, as he was hurrying past me, one evening, about dusk, muffled in his cloak.

"Only a little way from the castle," he responded, somewhat impatiently.

"Southward, eh?"

"Ah—yes."

"To Fiumara?"

"Why—yes."

"Take care, Oliver, my boy! The French 101st, a thousand strong, are cantoned there, and the end of this nightly visiting may be a few years' unpleasant captivity in Verdun or Bitche."

"Tush!" said he, impatiently; "I have my sword and pistols."

"So much the worse; they may only provoke the wrath of your captors. 'Tis a pity your fair one, Signora Montecino (that's her name, I believe), lives in so dangerous a vicinity."

"I am only going to visit the bishop of Nicastro."

"A shallow excuse, Oliver: you are not a man to relish the old bishop's society. By the bye, his niece is very pretty,—is she not?"

"Rather," said he, drily.

"So much so, that you think her face cannot be delineated too often."

"Stay, Claude, no quizzing: I won't stand it."

"She has a brother, or cousin, a sad fellow,—an outlawed guerilla, or something of that sort,—who has served under Francatripa, and is stained with a thousand nameless atrocities. And do you know what people say about the pretty signorina herself?"

"What say they?" he asked, sternly.

"That she is a nearer relation of the good padre

bishop, than he cares to have generally known: priests' nieces——"

"D——n their impudence! only yourself, Claude—Captain Dundas, I must request——"

"O, yes, I understand all that: ha, ha!"

"No man in the service——"

"What! do you really love this girl, Oliver?"

"Yes; on my honour, I do."

"Very possibly: but,—I speak as an old friend,—you do not mean seriously?"

He started, and coloured deeply.

"I know not," he muttered, hurriedly: "and yet, Claude, I cannot be so base as to think of her otherwise than as a man of honour ought to do. Her relationship to the old padre is, to say the best of it, somewhat dubious; but then, she is so good-tempered and ladylike—so gentle, so beautiful, and winning, that I cannot, for the soul of me, help loving her; and I pledged——"

"Pledged! Maladetto! as they say here, are you engaged to her?"

"Why, I did not make a particular—that is to say, not quite an engagement—pshaw! what am I talking here about?"

"I see! Ah, Oliver, you are evidently very deeply dipped with her: you cannot steal a march upon me. Let me advise you, Lascelles, to be cautious in your affair with this young lady. Your family, your fortune, all entitle you——"

"Thanks, Dundas! I don't require this tutor-like advice," said he, putting his foot in the stirrup of his roan horse, with a dash of hauteur in his manner.

"At Fiumara, the French keep a sharp look-out," I urged.

"Be it so," said he; "thither I go, at all risks."

"You are not acting wisely."

"Granted—one never does so in love."

"Be cautious, Oliver! I would be loth to lose you, and I find it will be necessary to 'come the senior over you,' as the mess say, and order that no officer or soldier shall go beyond one mile from camp or quarters."

"Do so to-morrow," he added, laughing: "but, meanwhile, ere the order is issued, I shall ride so far as Fiumara to-night. What is the parole?"

"*Maida*—countersign, *Italy*."

"Thank you: I do not wish to be fired on by the blundering Calabri," he replied, little imagining he would never require the watchword. "Adieu! by midnight I will return."

Breaking away, he leaped on his horse, and, dashing through the arched portal of the castle, rode down the hill, through Scylla, at a furious gallop.

I was under considerable apprehension for my rash friend's safety. Midnight passed—slowly the hours of morning rolled on. Day was breaking, and the peaks of Milia were burnished by the yet unrisen sun, when I visited the posts, to inquire for Lascelles. He had not returned; and, as he had never before been absent so long in such a dangerous neighbourhood, I became very uneasy: deeply I regretted that, even at the risk of unpleasant words, I had not exerted my authority as commanding officer, and compelled him to stay within the castle. The bugle sounded for morning parade at the usual hour, but Oliver Lascelles was not forthcoming—his place in the ranks was vacant.

On the advance of the French, the old bishop, before mentioned, had retired from the city of Nicastro, abandoning to them his residence—the ancient castle, famous as the place where Henry of Naples expiated his rebellion. Retiring to his little paternal villa, near Fiumara, he lived in retirement, unmolested by the French, who almost depopulated the surrounding country by their tyranny, extortions, and wanton outrage. On the side of a hill, at the base of which ran a deep and rapid stream, its banks covered with orange and citron-trees, stood the bishop's villa. It faced the Straits of Messina: high rocks and a thick wood of pines hid it from the view of the foe at Fiumara, otherwise, their forage-parties would assuredly have paid it a visit.

On the evening I last saw Oliver, a young lady was visible at an open window of this mansion. She was alone, and seated, in a reclining posture, on an ottoman, upon which lay her guitar; her hair, half-braided, half-disordered, rolled in natural ringlets of the deepest black over a neck of the purest white—so pure, so transparent, that the blue veins beneath were distinctly visible. She was not tall, but of a full and beautifully-rounded form;

and though her features were not regular, yet their expression was very captivating and piquant. Her eyes were dark and brilliant, her lips full and pouting, her cheeks flushed and dimpled.

Notwithstanding the season of the year, the air was close and still; the sun had set, and the sky wore a warm and fiery tinge, but the hills and wood were of a dark bronze hue.

Dianora Montecino listened impatiently. She awaited the coming of Oliver,—but he came not. She often surveyed her figure in a mirror which hung opposite, and a calm smile lighted up her pretty face: it was one of complacent but innocent admiration of her own attractions. Her hair being in partial disorder, languidly, with her delicate fingers, she endeavoured to adjust it; then pausing, she sighed, and, after again consulting the friendly mirror, with a pardonable coquetry, she allowed the flowing tresses to remain free.

"He always prefers me in dishabille. That seems strange,—and yet I think I really look better so. But truly, Signor Oliver, you tarry long to-night."

The last flush of sunlight vanished from the hills of Milia (or Mylæ), and now rose the bright moon, shedding its softer light over land and sea, tinging the Straits with silver lustre, and revealing the Sicilian feluccas, with their striped latteen sails, and other picturesque vessels, which the sombre shadows of evening had for a time obscured. At the base of the hills, the river wound between rocks and thickets, its surface reflecting the innumerable stars that studded the serene blue sky. A beautiful fountain, beneath the terrace, threw up its jet of water, like a ceaseless shower of diamonds; the air was laden with the perfume of the earliest flowers of an Italian spring, and not a breath of wind was abroad to stir their closed petals, then filled with fragrant dew. Intently the young girl hearkened for the tramp of her lover's horse,—but he came not: she heard only the tumultuous beating of her own heart, and the monotonous plash of the water falling from the bronze Triton's mouth into the marble basin below.

A step was heard softly on the gravel walk.

"At last he comes!" she said, pouting, while joy and hope sparkled in her dark and liquid eyes. A man leaped

over the balustrade of the terrace. "Dear Oliver, you have come at last: but stay, I owe you a scolding, signor mio!"

"'Tis not Oliver," replied the stranger, with a husky, but somewhat sad tone of voice; and he stood before her. Dianora's first impulse was to call for assistance, but the voice of the stranger again arrested her.

"For God's sake, signora, do not summon any one! You have nothing to fear from me—indeed you have not."

"Giosué, is it only you?" said the young lady, with a tone of undisguised reproach and vexation. There was a pause.

The unwelcome visitor was a young man about six-and-twenty, whose dress announced his occupation and rank in life to be somewhat dubious; but his air, though constrained in the presence of Dianora, had a dash of gallant and graceful recklessness in it. He wore the brigand garb, which had then become a kind of uniform adopted by all desperadoes; he had a carbine in his hand, and a knife and four long iron pistols were stuck in a yellow silk sash. A loose velvet jacket, knee-breeches, and gaiters crossed with red leather straps, displayed to advantage his fine athletic figure, and round his open neck hung a little bag, containing a charm, which he supposed rendered him bullet-proof. A large, shapeless, and battered Calabrian hat, with a royalist red riband flaunting from it, shaded his face, which was fringed with a black and untrimmed beard, and presented a kind of savage beauty, though squalid through want, and fierce in its expression, being marked with the lines of the worst passions. The young girl regarded him with a glance expressive equally of timidity and pity.

"Dianora—Dianora!" said he, reproachfully, but mildly, "there was a time when you were not wont to pronounce my name in such a tone. Alas! sweet cousin—like myself, its very sound seems changed."

"Poor Giosué!" she began.

"Was not expected here to-night," said he, bitterly. "No; you await another. Cattivo! I know it."

He regarded her gloomily, his fierce dark eyes sparkling in the twilight, like those of a basilisk; and she, who but a moment before had been all eagerness for the arrival

of Oliver Lascelles, now mentally implored Heaven that he might not come that night, for something dreadful would certainly ensue.

"Dianora," said the young man, "is it true what they tell me—that you love this stranger?"

"As I never can love thee, Giosué," replied the girl, with timid energy.

"Malediction! Have you forgotten how you once swore your hand should be mine?"

"True, Giosué; but you were not then what you have since become."

"Hear me, false one! I swear by God and his blessed saints, that the hand you promised me shall never be the prize of another. No! maladetto! I will slay you, rather!" He laughed bitterly, and spoke in a hoarse tone. "You despise me, Dianora. I am now a penniless outlaw. May our uncle, the hard-hearted bishop, whose miserly cruelty has driven me to despair——"

"O, most ungrateful and unkind, Giosué! say, rather, your own wild and intractable spirit has occasioned your destruction——"

"And the loss of your love, Dianora?"

"Indeed, Giosué, I never could have loved you as—you would wish to be loved; but I have pitied you, wept for you, prayed for you ——"

"Bless you, dear girl," replied the young man, with intense sadness; "you are very good and amiable, but I feel that love for you is making me mad!"

"Now, leave me, Giosué. Should the bishop find you here ——"

"Say, rather, he whom you expect!" he exclaimed, bitterly and jealously. "Ha! false and fickle one! within sound of my whistle are those who, in a moment, would bear you off to yonder mountains, in spite of all opposition, and leave in flames this villa of our dog of an uncle. But no, signora, I must have your love freely, or not at all."

"A moment ago you threatened ——"

"Peace! Attempt not to stir, until you have heard me. This cursed English lieutenant (ha! malediction! you see I know him), if he comes hither to-night, may get a reception such as he little expects." He uttered a ferocious laugh, and struck with his hand the weapons which gar-

nished his girdle. They clattered, and the heart of Dianora trembled between fear and indignation, for nothing rouses a young girl's spirit so much as hearing her lover spoken of lightly.

"Cospetto! let this baby-faced teniente beware," continued Giosué, "or, by the blessed Trinity! I will put a brace of bullets through his brain."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the trembling Dianora, "begone, lest I spit upon you! O, Giosué! are you indeed become so ruffianly? Have brigandism and outrage hardened you thus?"

He laughed sternly, and said, "You *do* expect him to-night, then?"

"What is that to you?" she replied, pettishly. "Cousin, I will love whom I please."

"You shall not love him."

Dianora, who was now angry in downright earnest, began to sing, and thrum the strings of her mandolin.

"Me non segni il biondo Dio,
Me con Fille unisca amore —"

"Dianora!" exclaimed the young man, in a voice half mournful and half ferocious. "By the memory of other days, I conjure you to hear me! Think how, as children —as orphans—we lived, and played, and grew together —hear me!" His voice grew thick; but the irritated girl continued her song.

"E poi sfoghi il suo rigore
Fato rio, nemico ciel."

"Cruel that thou art; thy wish will never be realized!" he exclaimed, fiercely. Still she continued:—

"Che il desio non mi tormenta,
O ——"

"Maledictions on you! Is it thus you treat me?"

Dianora laughed; he gazed intently upon her, with fierce, glistening eyes; his white lips were compressed with stern resolution, though agitation made them quiver —and that quivering was visible even in the moonlight.

"Dianora," said he, "for this time, I will leave you; but when again we meet—*tremble!* Fury! I am not to be treated like a child!"

"Do not be so passionate, signor cousin. Madonna mia! You are quite the Horazio of Matteo Aliman's novel!"

"Beware," he responded, with a dark and inexplicable scowl, "that your hand—the hand pledged as mine—is not bestowed upon your lover as Clarinia's was. Farewell, fickle and cruel Dianora! Misfortune and love are turning my brain."

"Say, rather, wine, dice, and debauchery."

"Diavolessa!" he exclaimed, in accents of rage, and springing over the terrace, disappeared.

Dianora resumed her guitar, but she could sing no more; her assumed nonchalance quite deserted her. The instrument fell on the floor; and, covering her face with her white hands, she wept bitterly, for Giosué's threats and Oliver's absence terrified her.

The calm moon looked down on the dark forests and the snaky windings of the river, on whose glassy bosom here and there a red glow marked the watch-fires of the distant French piquets. No one was ascending the mountain side. In the villa, in the valley below, and on the hills around it, the most intense silence prevailed. Eagerly Dianora listened. Anon, there rang through the welkin a shrill whistle—the whistle of Giosué; a faint cry succeeded; it rose from the river side, and floated tremulously upward through the still air. Another, and another followed; they were cries for succour! Her brain reeled—she sank upon her knees, and raised her hands to heaven—her heart beat wildly—she panted, rather than breathed. "O, God!" thought she, "if Oliver encounter the wild comrades of Giosué, what have I not to dread?"

Appalled by her own vivid and fearful thoughts, she sat, as if spell-bound, listening for other sounds, in an agony of suspense; but none other arose from the dark wooded dell than the murmur of the river, as its waters rolled on their way to the ocean.

"Joy—joy—he comes at last!" she exclaimed, as the hoofs of a galloping horse rang on the narrow and rocky pathway, which wound between thickets of orange and citron-trees, up the mountain side. "Dear and blessed lady of Burello, how I thank thee that he came not sooner! Three paters and three aves will I say. I see him now; 'tis he! How bravely he reins up his roan

English horse, with its high head and flowing mane! There is the dark cloak, and the little cap, beneath which his brown hair curls so crisply. Oh, well should I know him among a thousand!"

With all the frankness and ardour of an Italian girl, she rushed upon the terrace, and, waving her hand over the balustrade, said playfully, "You have come at last, signor mio. Fi! I owe you a severe lecture; approach, and receive it penitently."

At that moment, the horseman rode close to the wall of the terrace, and threw an arm around her. Overcome by her recent agitation, Dianora sank upon his breast, murmuring, in tender accents, "Oliver—dear Oliver."

"The curses of the whole calendar upon thee and Oliver too! Ha! you greet not *him* contemptuously with an old scrap of Metastasio. Burning hell! traitress, I recall your biting taunts, and will revenge me, even as Horazio did. Lo! the hand you pledged unto me shall yet be mine."

A smothered cry burst from Dianora. Instead of the handsome and flushed face of Oliver Lascelles, a livid and unearthly visage, distorted by the most vindictive passions, was close to her cheek; two ferocious eyes glared upon her, and the strong arm of Giosué was around her.

"Never again wilt thou scorn a lover, Dianora Montecino, and dear will *that* taunt cost thee which dictates my revenge."

His long, keen acciaro gleamed in the moonlight, as he grasped her beautiful hand with the grasp of a tiger—instantly the sharp knife descended upon the slender wrist!

* * * * * *

Let me throw a veil over the horrors that ensued.

The French sentinels on the windings of the lonely river, the wolf in the distant woods, and the eagle on the rocks of Battaglia, must have been alike startled by the agonizing shrieks of Dianora. Fearful they were, but of short duration. A moan succeeded—a moan of terrible import. Then rang the hoofs of a horse, as if spurred madly down the steep roadway. A turn of the dell hid the wild horseman, and then all became still.

Her right hand severed at the wrist, her nose cut off, and her face seamed with the most frightful gashes,

Dianora was found by the alarmed household of the bishop, stretched on the marble terrace, bleeding and senseless—mutilated—dying. She was borne away; convulsions succeeded, and that night the unhappy Dianora died.

She expired in the arms of the venerable bishop, whose grief and horror rendered him almost distracted.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE MONASTERY.

To return to Scylla. The hour of parade passed; Lascelles had not yet returned, and I could no longer withstand my anxiety for his safety. Accompanied by my intelligent countryman Gask, a bugler, and twenty soldiers, in light marching order, each with sixty rounds of ammunition, I departed in the direction of Fiumara, on the almost hopeless errand of endeavouring to discover him. I now reproached myself bitterly, and really thought I had been much to blame in not restricting my rash friend, even at the chance of a quarrel; it could not have been of long duration.

Leaving Scylla as quietly as possible, we marched towards Fiumara, by the most lonely and unfrequented route, through gorges and thickets, expecting every instant to hear the musket of our advanced file discharged, as a signal that a patrol of French cavalry, or some such interruption, was in sight.

It was a beautiful morning; the rays of the bright sun streamed aslant between the peaks of Mylæ, and the white dewy vapour curled from the dells, like a gauze screen, mellowing the dark green of the pine-thickets, and the blue of the gleaming ocean, which shone at times between the openings of the high and broken shore. The morning hymn to the Virgin, and the tolling of the matin-bell, floated through the still air, from the dark old walls of St. Battaglia, a monastery perched on a rock, by the base of which the pathway wound. On we hurried, and soon Fiumara, its houses shining in the sun, the red

smoky fires of the French camp, and their chain of outpiquets near the river, appeared before us.

At the bottom of the hill, on which the villa of Montecino was situated, just as we were striking into the narrow path that wound up its wooded side, our advanced file (who was about fifty paces in front), halted, and waved his hand.

"Keep together, men! fix bayonets!—look to your priming—forward!" I exclaimed, and we rushed towards him. There was no immediate cause for alarm; but on a level spot of green sward, we discovered sufficient evidence that some deed of violence and atrocity had been perpetrated, and I trembled for my poor friend Oliver! On the grass, lay his gilded gorget, with its white silk riband rent in two; near it lay a buff military glove, covered with blood; a little further on, we found his riding-switch, with his crest graven on its gold embossed head. All around, the trampled state of the grass, the marks of feet (some of which had evidently been shoeless), the deep indents of horse-hoofs, and, worst of all, a pool of coagulated blood on the pathway, led us to anticipate some terrible catastrophe. Loud and deep were the threats and execrations of the soldiers.

At an accelerated pace, we pushed up the hill towards the house of Montecino, passing on our left the moldering ruins of a castelletto, or little fortalice, the broken ramparts of which were almost hidden under heavy masses of dark-green ivy and luxuriant weeds.

Entering the bishop's disordered mansion without ceremony, I halted the soldiers in the vestibule, and desired a servant, who appeared, to conduct me to her master. The woman vouchsafed me no other reply than a motion to follow her: she was very pale, and her eyes were red from recent weeping. Opening a door, she ushered me into a little darkened oratory, where, on a bier before the altar, surrounded by tapers, shedding "a dim, religious light," lay the sad remains of the hapless Dianora. They were covered with a white shroud, and so completely, that I beheld not the frightful ravages committed by the knife of the assassin. Beside the body — his white vestments soiled with blood, his thin grey hairs dishevelled, his aspect wild and haggard — knelt Pietro Montecino, the aged bishop of Nicastro, his attenuated hands clasped, and

holding a crucifix, on which, at times, he bowed down his reverend head. His wonted spiritual resignation, priestly dignity, and stateliness of aspect were gone; his spirit was crushed and broken. How changed was his whole appearance since the day when, with Bianca, I stood before the altar in the church of his bishopric!

"O, Dianora! my daughter—my child!" he exclaimed, in accents of the deepest grief: "O Madonna, have mercy upon me! Holy Trinity, have mercy upon me! Dianora, my blessed one! Saint Eufemio, pray for her! Saint Magdalene, pray for her! Sweet lady of Burello!—beatified Rosalia!—thrice-blessed lady of Loretto, mother of mercy! hear me, and pray for her!" Heavy sobs succeeded.

The touching tones of his voice, and the passionate fervour of his devout appeals, deeply moved me. So intense was his sorrow, that it almost warranted the suspicion of a nearer relationship to Dianora than his vows and character as a Catholic churchman permitted; but no such ungenerous thought occurred to me then: my heart felt only the deepest and most sincere compassion for the bereaved old man. He was so besotted with woe, that I saw it was next to impossible to obtain from him the least intelligence or advice; and, withdrawing softly, I left the villa immediately.

When descending the hill towards the spot where we had found the relics of our missing comrade, we met a peasant, who, with a long ox-goad, was urging a pair of lazy buffaloes towards Scylla. I desired my soldiers to bring him before me, in the desperate hope of obtaining some information concerning poor Lascelles; and, strange to say, we could not have had a luckier rencontre, or better intelligencer.

"Hollo, Signor Campagnuolo!" said I to the cattle-driver, "from whence have you come this morning—Fiumara, eh?"

"No, Signor."

"Where, then?"

"From the monastery of Battaglia, down the mountains yonder," he answered somewhat reservedly; and, endeavouring to pass, he added, "a holy day to you, Signor."

"Any movement taking place among the French lately? Are any of their patrols out?"

"I have not heard, excellency; but a fugitive, chased by a party of them, took refuge at the monastery this morning, and is said to have confessed to the Padre Abate a horrible crime."

"Ha! and is he now in the sanctuary?" I demanded, eagerly.

"Prostrate on the steps of the altar; his penitence is great. Madonna, intercede for him!"

"Thanks," said I, permitting the uneasy rustic to pass on his way. "Advance, soldiers—trail arms—forward, double quick! We have got on the right scent at last, perhaps; and there is not a moment to be lost."

With right goodwill the soldiers moved forward towards the monastery, their arms glancing and pouches clanking as they rushed down the steep hill-side. The place of our destination, a confused mass of irregular buildings, stood near the river before mentioned, about a mile distant. It was a monastery of great antiquity; a high wall of grey stone girdled it round, and above that rose its campanile, a square tower, surmounted by a flat tiled roof. From the outer wall, the rocks on which the edifice was perched sloped precipitously down on all sides, especially towards the south, where they descended in one unbroken line to the deep, dark waters of the still but rapid stream, which wound through a chasm below.

As we began to ascend the steep and devious path cut in the hard volcanic rock, and leading directly to the monastery, we saw the monks appearing and disappearing like black crows on their high outer wall, and the arched gateway was hurriedly closed: the fathers were evidently in a state of consternation, and making all fast, fearing that we might disregard the immunities of the holy sanctuary. All the friars had vanished by the time we reached the iron-studded door in the outer wall, over which the evergreen ivy and long rank grass were waving in profusion.

We knocked loudly. No answer was given.

"Sound!" said I to the bugle-boy; and a loud blast from his instrument made the old walls, the echoing chapel, the bosky woods, and splintered rocks ring far and near. Still the summons was unheeded, and the impatient soldiers thundered at the gateway with the butts of their

muskets. The reverend fathers no doubt suspected our purpose.

"What want ye?" said an old vinegar-visaged friar, appearing on the top of the wall, which he had surmounted by the assistance of a ladder.

"Are you all asleep within there?" I answered, angrily. "We want a fugitive, to whom you have given refuge. Call you this civility, padre? and to us whose swords are drawn in the cause of your country?"

"Beware, Signori Inglesi! dare you violate the rights of the blessed sanctuary?"

"You will soon learn whether we will not, you old scarecrow!" I replied, with increased impatience. "Aprite la porta, Signor Canonico, or by Heaven! we will beat it down in a twinkling!"

"Patience, capitano—patience, until I confer with the reverend Superior."

"Be quick, then! We must see instantly this rascal who has obtained sanctuary. The enemy are so near, that we have not a moment to lose."

The monk disappeared. I directed Gask, with six soldiers, to watch the walls, and capture or wound any man attempting to escape; but not to kill, if possible. I was most anxious to learn with certainty the fate of Lascelles: whether he had been assassinated, or was lying perishing and mutilated in some solitary place, or had been delivered up to the French. Indeed, I should have been relieved from a load of anxiety, and felt overjoyed to learn that his fate was only the last. Gask was as well aware as I how jealous the continental monks were of the ancient right of sanctuary, and he knew that they would rather favour the escape of the vilest criminal than deliver him up to offended justice. Of their obstinacy in this respect, I know of several instances: one I will mention in particular. It occurred at Malta:—

A soldier of ours, when passing one day through a street of Valetta, was run against and thrown down by a provoking brute of a pig. Exasperated at having his gay uniform soiled by the dusty street, he gave the grunting porker a hearty kick; upon which, the villanous macellajo, to whom it belonged, drew his poniard and stabbed him to the heart. The poor soldier fell dead on the pavement; the murderer fled to the great church of St. John, and obtained sanc-

tuary. Respecting the popular prejudices of the Maltese (who regard with the greatest veneration that sacred edifice, which contains the sepulchres of innumerable brave knights of the Isle), the general commanding permitted the hot-blooded ruffian to remain some time in sanctuary, before he applied to the bishop for the exertion of his authority to have him delivered up to the civil magistrates. The prelate delayed, equivocated; and the reverend fathers, foreseeing the violation of their famous place of refuge, facilitated the escape of the assassin, and so defeated the ends of justice.

I was determined that the priests of St. Battaglia should not cheat me so in this affair; and, after desiring Gask with his party to keep on the alert, I was about to have the door blown to pieces by a volley of musketry, when the bars were withdrawn, and it slowly revolved on its creaking hinges. The soldiers were about to rush in; but the sight they beheld arrested them: all paused, mute, and turned inquiringly to me for instructions.

CHAPTER LX.

THE SANCTUARY VIOLATED.

THE portal of the edifice slowly unfolded, disclosing the whole array of priests, who, clad in their floating vestments, advanced, chanting, from the oratory, with tapers burning, censers smoking, and two emblazoned banners waving, one of white silk, bearing a large crimson cross, surmounted by the sacred charge of St. Peter—the keys of heaven; the other, the symbolical banner of St. Battaglia, surrounded by all the imaginary odour and glory of sanctity. The spectacle was very imposing: the tapers of scented wax, and the silver censers, filled with lavender flowers, diffused through the air a fragrant perfume; while the pale, curling smoke that encircled the gilded crosses and elevated images, rendered—

> "—— Indistinct the pageant proud,
> As fancy forms of midnight cloud,
> When flings the moon upon her shroud
> A wavering tinge of flame."

The misty vapour, the flickering lights, and the flowing garments of the fathers; the dark walls of the old cloisters, which rang to the solemn and sonorous chant of twenty male voices; the distant organ swelling aloud, and then dying away in the hollow recesses of the arched oratory, together produced a striking effect. The abbot, an aged priest of venerable aspect, with a beard white as the new-fallen snow (then an unusual appendage to a canon's chin), appeared at their head. They halted beneath the ivy-crowned archway; the chant ceased, the soldiers drew back, and all were silent: save the magnificent strains of the organ, reverberating in the vaulted chapel, and the rustle of the consecrated standards, all was still. The abbot, who no doubt expected that this religious display would impress us with a feeling of awe, then addressed me—

"Your purpose, signor?" he asked, mildly, but firmly.

"Reverend abate," I responded, lowering my sword respectfully, "I demand the person of a vile assassin, whom I have learned, from unquestionable authority, you have concealed within these walls!"

"He whom you seek is under the protection of God. Know, signor, that he who puts forth a hand in anger against one who seeketh and findeth sanctuary in the church, is guilty of the most atrocious sacrilege!"

"On my own head be the guilt of the sacrilege, Padre Abate. Excuse us: the French are in your immediate vicinity, and we run the imminent risk of being all taken prisoners. One of our comrades, a young officer of distinction, is missing; and a frightful assassination has been committed at the villa Montecino: we have every reason to believe that your favoured fugitive is implicated in both these mysterious occurrences. I cannot parley with you, reverend signor: I demand an interview with the criminal; and, if he is not instantly brought forth, I have to acquaint you that I will search the monastery by force; and, if need be, drag him from the very altar at the point of the bayonet!"

Ere the indignant abbot could reply—

"Darest thou, abominable heretic as thou art, violate the house of God?" cried a tall, fierce-looking, and fanatical monk, rushing forward, with flushed cheeks

and kindling eyes, and holding aloft a ponderous ebony crucifix. "Pause, lest the thunders of offended Heaven be hurled upon ye; pause, lest the vials of wrath——"

"Pshaw!" I exclaimed, impatiently; "we may parley here till sunset. Soldiers, forward to the chapel; there you will doubtless discover the rogue." My followers rushed past: a volley of execrations burst from the padri, and I was assailed with cries of "paganico infame! malandrino!—infidel! damnable heretic!" and a thousand other injurious and ridiculous epithets. I heeded them not; but, at the head of my party, burst into the chapel of the monastery. I had augured rightly: *there* the fugitive was discovered.

Pale as death, ghastly and bloody from a sword-wound on the head, a savage-looking fellow was dragged by force from the foot of the great gilt crucifix on the altar, to the rail of which he clung for a moment with convulsive energy. The soldiers brought him before me, and, by their fixed bayonets, kept back the exasperated priests, who continued to pour forth upon us a ceaseless torrent of invectives and maledictions, which we regarded no more than the wind.

"Are you the unhappy man who is guilty of murder?" said I. He replied only by a wild and unmeaning stare.

"Unhappy wretch! your name?"

"Giosué of Montecino," said he, suddenly and fiercely. I trembled for poor Oliver, on remembering the name of his rival.

"Villain! what fiend tempted you to slay your unhappy cousin?"

He started, as if stung by a serpent.

"She is dead, then," he said, in a hoarse and almost inarticulate voice, while his head drooped upon his heaving breast. Suddenly uttering a howl like a wild beast, he broke away from the soldiers, escaping their levelled bayonets, and finding the gate secured, scrambled up the rugged outer wall like a polecat; there balancing himself, he turned, and regarded me with a scornful scowl,—he burst into a bitter and hysterical laugh. The soldiers rushed towards him, and one fired, but I threw up his firelock, and the ball passed close to the head of the assassin, who never winced. Escape was now impossible: on one side of him bristled twenty bayonets; on the other,

was a tremendous precipice, with a deep river flowing at its base several hundred feet below. The slightest dizziness might have been fatal to him. But folding his arms, he uttered a laugh of defiance, and called upon us to fire. I was strongly tempted to put his talisman to the proof, but restrained my exasperated soldiers.

"Wretch!" said I, "know you aught of a British officer, who has been missing since last night?"

"Yes," he replied, with a sardonic grin, shaking his clenched right hand aloft with savage exultation. "These are the fingers that fastened on his throat with a tiger's clutch."

"You slew him!" I cried, and drew a pistol from my sash.

"I did not—ha! and yet I did."

"How, villain?" He laughed scornfully again.

"Hear me, Giosué Montecino," said I: "you see this pistol? I might, in one moment, deprive you of existence——"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the assassin.

"Yet I will spare your life, if you will tell me the fate of my comrade."

"My life? Bagatella! ho! ho! I want it not. Fools—dolts that ye are! think ye that I am afraid to die? Here is my breast: a thousand bullets were welcome—straight to the heart—fire!" and he smote his bosom as he spoke. There was something almost noble in his aspect at that moment, notwithstanding its wildness and repulsiveness.

"Hear me, fellow: the Lieutenant Lascelles——"

"Ha!" he ground his teeth madly. "Curses hurl him to that perdition into which he has hurried me! At this moment, he feels in the body some of those agonies I endure in the spirit. O Dianora!—thou, whose very shadow I worshipped,—I, who loved the very ground you trod upon!" The inexplicable ruffian sobbed heavily, yet his blood-shot eyes were never moistened by a tear. "O Dianora!" he continued, in a voice, which, though husky, yet expressed the most intense pathos; "who was the fiend that nerved me to destroy thee, and so barbarously? Who, but this accursed Englishman? Believe me, signor, I had not the least intention of slaying her last night. O no! none—none." He wrung his hands wildly. "What

could be further from my thoughts? Disguised as her lover—as this Oliver—I intended to have carried her off, but her endearing accents, addressed as to him, fell like scorching fire upon my heart. I could restrain my demoniac feelings no longer. O, horror! Yet I have done nothing that I would not commit again, rather than behold her in the arms of—of—Maladetto!—his name is poison to my lips!"

"Madman! come down from the wall."

"Would you learn the fate of your friend?" he asked, exultingly.

"Had I a mountain of gold to give you——"

"Gold?—fool!—what is gold to me? Listen: waylaid by my companions last night, the dog you call your comrade was dashed from his horse by their clubs. He fought bravely, and with his sabre laid open my head: my own blood blinded me. Ha! a moment, and my hand was on his throat—my acciaro at his breast—yet I spared him."

"Heaven will reward you——"

"Ha! ha! A sudden death suited not my purpose or my hate. Slow, consuming, diabolical, mental tortures were what I wanted: and what think you we did?" I was breathless; I could not ask, but Giosué continued—

"Bound with cords, he was borne to a ruined vault among the lonely mountains yonder; there, amid stinging adders, hissing vipers, bloated toads, and voracious polecats, we flung him down, tied hand and foot, stunned and bleeding. Then closing the aperture, we piled up earth, and stones, and rocks against it. There let him perish—unseen, unknown, unheard. May never an ave be said over his bones, and may a curse blight, haunt, and blast, to all futurity, the spot where they lie!" He paused for a moment and then continued more slowly and energetically—

"To laugh to scorn the terror of death was the glory of the Greek and the Roman; and I will show thee, Signor Inglese, that Giosué of Montecino can despise it as nobly as his classic fathers may have done in the days of old." He raised aloft a long bright poniard, which he suddenly drew forth from his sleeve.

"Madman! desperado!" I exclaimed, "hold, for the sake of mercy! A word—a word—I will give you a

thousand ducats—life—all—anything! but say where you have imprisoned my friend?—for Heaven's sake, say!"

"Never!" said he, with a triumphant scowl; "*never!* let him perish with myself. Love for Dianora led me to destroy her, and love for her still, teaches me that to survive would be the foulest and basest cowardice!"

He struck the stiletto to his heart, and fell dead at my feet.

I was horror-stricken: not by the suicide of the assassin, but by the revelation he had just made. Of its truth, I could not entertain a doubt. The situation of the unfortunate Lascelles, pinioned, wounded, and entombed alive, to endure all the protracted agonies of death by starvation, rushed vividly upon my mind, and overwhelmed me with rage and mortification. I explained to my soldiers the terrible confession of the fierce Giosué, and their emotions were not much short of my own. We endured tantalization in its bitterest sense. What would I not have given that the convulsed corpse of the vindictive Montecino were yet endued with life. But, alas! the ruffian had perished in his villany, with the important secret undisclosed, and the horrible fate of my friend could not be averted.

And Giosué, wretch as he was, I pitied him. His had been the burning love, and his the deadly hatred of his country—

> "The cold in clime, or cold in blood,
> Their love, it scarce deserves a name;
> But *his* was like the lava's flood,
> That boils in Etna's breast of flame."

Slowly and dejectedly we quitted the monastery, as the sun was setting behind the hills of Sicily; and marching in silence towards Scylla, we reached a third time the place where Oliver's glove and gorget had been found. There we made an involuntary halt, and gazed around us with the keenest scrutiny, in the hope of discovering some clue to the place of his immurement. My brave party seemed very unwilling to return to Scylla without making another effort to rescue the victim of Montecino. Innumerable were the ideas suggested and plans proposed, but none of them seemed worthy of attention, save one of Serjeant Gask's.

"The rascal mentioned a ruined vault among the hills," said he; "now what think you, Captain Dundas, of searching the ruins on the mountain yonder? And, by my faith, sir, the footmarks and traces of blood lead off in that direction. See! the lower branches of the shrubs are broken, the withered leaves of the last year are trodden down, and bloody tracks are on the grass."

"The serjeant is right, sir," muttered the soldiers, pleased with his acuteness.

"Move on, then; forward, to the old castle: any active occupation is preferable to this horrid state of idle suspense."

A quarter of an hour's rapid marching brought us to the castelletto, a little tower in a state of great dilapidation, covered with masses of bronze-like ivy, and the beautiful wild flowers of fruitful Italy. A large owl flew from one of the shattered openings, and, with a shrill scream, soared on its heavy wings through the evening sky. The woods and hills around us were growing dark; the place was still as the grave—the ivy-leaves rustling tremulously on the rugged masonry of the ruin, and a rivulet tinkling through a fissure of a neighbouring rock, were the only sounds we heard. Solemn pines towered around it on every hand, and the aspect of the landscape was peculiarly desolate and gloomy. A musket was fired as a signal, and, with a thousand reverberations, the wooded hills gave back the echo. With heads bent to the ground, we listened intently; but there was no response, and we looked blankly in each other's faces.

"This cannot be the place," said I, in a tone of sadness, about to move unwillingly away.

"Stay, sir—look here, Captain Dundas," cried Gask; "here is blood on the grass, and, sure as I live, stones freshly heaped up there!"

"Right—by Jove! Gask, you are an acute fellow. Pile your firelocks, lads, and clear away this heap of rubbish."

Flushed with hope, the soldiers attacked the pile of stones indicated by the serjeant; there were bushes, earth, and fragments of ruined masonry, all evidently but recently piled up against the base of the tower. Rapidly they rolled down the heavy blocks, and toiled so strenuously, that in three minutes the whole heap was

cleared away, and a little arched aperture disclosed. An exclamation of joy and hope burst from the whole party; we had found the place. Gask and the little bugler descended into the vault—a dark, damp, and hideous hole, under the ruins. A faint moan drew them cautiously to a corner, and there they found the object of all our search and anxiety—Oliver Lascelles, benumbed by cold, and his limbs swollen almost to bursting by the tight cordage which confined them. He was speechless, and half-stifled by the noxious vapours of the dungeon: had we been half an hour later, he must have expired. When we drew him forth, he was so pale, haggard, and death-like, that his aspect shocked me; but the pure fresh breeze of the balmy evening revived him, and he recovered rapidly. He could not address us at first; but his looks of thankfulness, joy, and recognition were most expressive. The soldiers were merry and happy, every face beamed with gladness; even Gask's usually grave and melancholy visage was brightened by a smile.

We had little time for explanation; we were in a dangerous vicinity, from which it was necessary to retire without a moment's delay. Oliver was quite enfeebled; but, supported on the serjeant's arm and mine, he contrived to walk, though slowly, and we set out immediately for the castle of Scylla.

Gask afterwards told me, that in the vault "he had touched something that made his flesh creep." It was a small and delicate female hand. I never mentioned the circumstance to Oliver, who was long in recovering from the effects of his perilous love adventure. But I had no doubt the dead hand was poor Dianora's; the *forfeited* hand, which in cruel mockery that incarnate demon Giosué had thrown beside her lover.

In the bustle of succeeding and more important events, the interest we took in Lascelles' affair gradually subsided. But it was long ere he forgot the fate of Dianora, and the horrible death, which, by a lucky combination of incidents, he had so narrowly escaped; and longer still ere he recovered his wonted buoyancy of spirit and lightness of heart.

CHAPTER LXI.

UNEXPECTED PERILS.

THE near approach of the enemy made it apparent that the town of Scylla would soon be destroyed by the shot and shell their artillery would pour upon it; and that the Free Corps, who occupied its half-ruined streets, would be sacrificed, without being of service to the garrison in the castle; I therefore telegraphed to the *Electra* to send off a boat, as I wished to consult with her commander about the transmission of those troops to Messina.

A strong breeze had been blowing from the south-west all day, and the sea ran with such fury through the Straits, that no boat could come off until after sunset, when there was a lull. Immediately, on being informed that a boat had arrived at the sea staircase, I buckled on my sabre, threw my cloak round me, and hurried off, intending to return before the ever-anxious Bianca had discovered my absence. How vain were my anticipations!

The long *fetch* of the sea running from Syracuse rolled the breakers with great fury on the castle rock, and the boat was tossed about like a cork among the foaming surf that seethed and hissed around us. As the oars dipped in the water and she shot away, I seated myself in the stern-sheets, beside the little middy who held the tiller-ropes. The frigate lay nearly a mile to the southward, and there was such a tremendous current against us, that the six oarsmen, though straining ever nerve and sinew, found it impossible to make head against it.

"I wish we may make the frigate to-night, sir," said the midshipman, looking anxiously at the clouds; "there's a squall coming from the south-south-east, and these Straits are an awkward place to be caught by one. What do you think, Tom Taut?"

"Think, sir? why that we'll have a dirty night," replied the sailor whom he addressed; a grim, brown, and brawny tar. "When I sailed in the *Polly Femus*, 74, we had just such a night as this off Scylla, and I won't be in a hurry forgetting it!"

It was now past sunset, in the month of February, and

the darkness of the lowering sky increased rapidly. Through the thin mist floating over the surface of the water, the frigate loomed large; but when the rising wind cleared it away, we found the distance increasing between us: the strong current was carrying us, at the rate of five knots an hour, towards the terrible rock we had just left, which rose from the water like a black gigantic tower, and seemed ever to be close by, frowning its terrors upon us. Dense banks of vapour soon shrouded the land and hid the frigate; it grew so dark, that we knew not which way to steer. The seamen still continued to pull fruitlessly; for we made so much sternway, that I expected to find the frail craft momently stranded on the rocky beach.

"We shall never reach the frigate to-night, unless she fills, and makes a stretch towards us," said the middy. "This current will not change till daylight, and the Lord knows when the wind will chop about. It has been blowing from Syracuse ever since the poor little *Delight* was driven on the rocks yonder."

"You cannot fetch Scylla, I suppose?"

"Lord, no, sir! we must give it a wide berth; the breakers will be running against it in mountains, just now. We must put up the helm and run with the wind and tide, to avoid swamping; and if we escape being sucked into Charybdis on the westward, or beached under the cliffs of Palmi to the northward, we may consider ourselves lucky dogs."

"But we may be thrown upon a part of the coast occupied by the enemy."

"Better that than go to old Davy, sir," said the grey-haired bow-oarsman, "as I nearly did when the *Polly Femus*, 74, came through these same Straits of Messina."

"When?" said I;—"lately?"

"Lord love you, no sir—why 'twas in the year one."

"One!"

"That is, 1801. We were standing for Malta, with a stiff breeze from the nor'-east. The *Polly Femus* was close-hauled on the starboard tack——"

"D—n the *Polyphemus*," cried the midshipman, testily, as he put the helm up; "take in your loose gaff, Tom; if we are not picked up by the *Amphion*, your tune

will be changed before morning. Hoste keeps a good look-out."

"He was made a sailor of in the *Polly*—whew! beg pardon sir," said the old fellow, who could not resist making another allusion to his old ship.

"Faith! Captain Dundas," said the middy, "it is so dark, that I have not the slightest notion of our whereabouts."

"Yonder's a spark, away to windward, sir," said old Tom. "The *Electra* cannot be less than somewhere about two miles off—a few fathoms, more or less."

At that moment, the frigate fired a gun; the red flash gleamed through the gloom, and after a lapse, the report was borne past us on the night wind. A blue light was next burned; it shone like a distant star above the black and tumbling sea, then expired; and so did all our hopes of reaching the ship—the sound of her gun having informed us that we had been swept by the current far to the north of the Lanterna of Messina, which was rapidly being lost amid the murky vapour.

"Keep a good look-out there forward," cried the middy; "if we miss the *Amphion*, we may all go to the bottom, or be under weigh for a French prison by this time to-morrow."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the sailor through his hand, while, bending forward, he strove to pierce the gloom ahead.

"Give way, men—cheerily now."

The rowers stretched back over the thwarts, till their oars bent like willow wands, and as the strong current was with us now, we flew through the foaming water with the speed of a race-horse.

"The *Amphion* should be somewhere hereabouts," said the midshipman, as the oarsmen suspended their labours, after a quarter of an hour's pulling; we anxiously scanned the gloomy, watery waste, but could discern no trace of her. Vapour and obscurity involved us on every side, and our minds became a prey to apprehensions, while our blood chilled with the cold atmosphere, and a three hours' seat in an open boat at such a season. The tower of the Lantern had vanished; a single star only was visible, and the inky waves often hid it, as the boat plunged down into the dark trough of the midnight sea.

Suddenly the broad moon showed her silvery disc above the level horizon; her size seemed immense, and as the thin gauzy clouds rolled away from her shining face, we saw the black waves rising and falling in strong outline between. Her aspect was gloomy and lowering.

"When the moon sets, the current will begin to run northward," said the experienced little mid, "and we shall have a capital chance of being sucked into the Calofaro, or stranded on Punta Secca. Would to God we saw the frigate!"

As he spoke, a large vessel passed across the bright face of that magnificent moon, which shed a long line of silver light across the troubled water, brightening the summits of the waves, as they rose successively from the dark bosom of the sea. The effect was beautiful, as the vessel passed on the rolling surge, and, heaving gracefully, slid away into obscurity.

"A large frigate on the starboard tack," said the midshipman, as she disappeared; "she is five miles off."

"That's the *Amphion*, your honour," said Tom Taut; "I know her as well as the old *Polly Femus*."

"Are you sure?" I asked, with anxiety.

"Sure!" replied Tom, energetically, spitting his quid to leeward; "I know her in a moment, by the rake of her spars. Her mizen top-sail aback—her courses shivering: I know her better than any ship on the station, except the darling old *Polly*. Bill Hoste is creeping along shore, after some of these gun-boats the *Delight* let slip so easily."

"If I judge rightly, we must be somewhere off Palmi."

"Hark!" said the midshipman; and the roar of billows rolling on the shore confirmed my supposition.

"Breakers ahead!" cried the man at the bow; and we beheld a long white frothy line, glimmering through the gloom, and above it towered the dark outline of a lofty coast. The current shot us among the surf, which boiled around us, as white as if we were amid the terrors of Charybdis. A little cove, where the waves rolled gently up the sandy slope, invited us to enter; the boat ran in, and we were immediately in the smooth water of a little harbour, where the dark wild woods overhung the rocks at its entrance, and all around it on every side. Here we

hoped to remain unseen, till daylight revealed our "whereabouts," as the middy had it.

For a time, we kept the oars in the rowlocks, ready to retire on a moment's notice; but finding that not a sound, save the dashing sea, woke the echoes of that lonely place, I volunteered to land and make a reconnoissance, desiring the midshipman to pull southward along the shore, in case of any alarm, that I might be picked up at some other point. Belting my sabre tighter, I threw aside my cloak, and sprang ashore. On walking a little way forward through the wood, I found the country open, and saw lights at a distance, which I conjectured to be those of Palmi or Seminara, where Regnier had concentrated a strong body of troops.

Struggling forward among a wilderness of prostrate columns and shattered walls, overgrown with creeping plants and foliage (probably the ruins of ancient *Taurianum*), I often stopped, and bent to the ground to listen, but heard only the creaking trees, the gurgle of a lonely rill, seeking its devious path to the sea, or the rustle of withered leaves, swept over the waste by the rising wind. But the roll of a distant drum, and the flash of a cannon, about two miles off, arrested my steps, and made me think of returning: I conjectured it to be the morning gun from the French fort at Palmi. Daylight soon began to brighten the summits of the Apennines, and the waves, as they rolled on each far-off promontory and cape. Having nearly a mile to walk, I began hurriedly to retrace my steps, for the dawn stole rapidly on. As I walked on, the deep boom of a cannonade, and the sharp patter of small arms, made my heart leap with excitement and anxiety, and spurred me in my flight. Breaking through the wood, I rushed breathlessly to the shore—but, alas! the boat was gone: I saw it pulled seaward, with a speed which the strong flow of the morning current accelerated. In close chase, giving stroke for stroke, while the crew plied their muskets and twenty-four pounder, followed one of those unlucky gun-boats captured by the French: it had been anchored in the same cove, and had discovered our little shallop the moment day broke.

The pursued and the pursuers soon disappeared behind a promontory, and I found myself alone, far behind the enemy's lines, and almost without a chance of escape.

Cursing the zeal which had led me on such a fruitless reconnoissance, I retired into a beech-wood, as the safest place, and lay down in a thicket, to reflect on my position, and form a plan for extrication from it.

CHAPTER LXII.

CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY.—THE TWO GENERALS.

I WAS only twelve miles distant from Scylla; but, as every approach to it was closely blocked up by Regnier, whose troops covered the whole province from sea to sea, every attempt to reach it would be attended by innumerable dangers and difficulties; yet, confiding in the loyalty of the Calabrese, and the influence my name had among them, I did not despair of regaining the fortress, by seeking its vicinity through the most retired paths.

Except my sword, spurs, and Hessian boots, I had nothing military about me, as I wore a Calabrian doublet of grey cloth, and a nondescript forage-cap. As I walked forward, the trees became more scattered, and the openness of the ground made the utmost circumspection necessary. A sudden cry of "Halte! arrêtez!" made me pause; and, within a few paces, I beheld a French vidette—a lancer, in his long scarlet cloak, which flowed from his shoulders over the crupper of his horse, and, like his heavy plume and tricoloured banderole, was dank with dew.

"Ah, sacre coquin!" he cried, lowering his lance, and charging me at full speed. "I see you are an Englishman." I sprang behind a tree, and, as he passed me in full career, by a blow of my sabre I hewed the steel head from his lance. At that moment, an officer rode up, and, placing a pistol at my head, commanded me to yield. Resistance was vain, and I surrendered my sabre in the most indescribable sorrow and chagrin,—for thoughts of Bianca, of a long separation and imprisonment, of all my blighted hopes of happiness, honour, and promotion, and of the important trust reposed in me, rushed in a flood upon my mind: almost stupified, I was led away by my captor.

A few minutes' walk brought us to the bivouac of a cavalry brigade, which was in all the bustle of preparation for the march, while six trumpeters, blowing "boot and saddle," made the furthest dingles of the forest ring. The horses were all piqueted under trees or within breast-ropes; and the officer informed me that the brigade was that of General Compere, before whom he led me.

Rolled up in a cloak, the general was seated at the foot of a tree: behind him stood his mounted orderly, holding his charger by the bridle. His aide-de-camp and a number of officers lounged round him, smoking cigars, drinking wine from a little barrel, and joking with great hilarity, ere they marched. The ashes of the watch-fires smouldered near, the mist was curling between the branches of the leafless trees, and the rising sun glittered on the bright lance-heads, the gay caps, and accoutrements, of the dashing lancers, who were rapidly unpiqueting their chargers, and forming close column of squadrons, on the skirts of the wood.

"Monsieur le vicomte is welcome as flowers in spring," said the general; "but who is this?—Ah!" he exclaimed, suddenly recognizing me, and raising politely his cocked-hat. "I did not expect to have this pleasure. You are the brave officer I met at Maida?"

I bowed.

"And again behind our lines at Cassano—disguised as a monk?" he added, with a keen glance.

"Thrown upon that coast by shipwreck, I gladly adopted any disguise, until I could escape."

"Our whole army heard of you, and understood you had been employed as a spy by the count of Maida; consequently, Massena was enraged at your escape. Ah! the old Tambour—he is a rough dog! However, monsieur, *I* do not believe that one who could fight so gallantly at Maida, would stoop to act a dishonourable part."

"Yet, will monsieur be so good as explain," said another officer, "how we find him *here*, without the lines drawn round Scylla, to the garrison of which he says he belongs—and why in the garb of a Calabrian?"

Indignant at the suspicious nature of these queries, and unused to the humiliating situation of a prisoner, I replied briefly and haughtily, relating how I had missed the

boat—a story which none of them seemed to believe. A whisper ran round, and the offensive term "*espion*," brought the blood rushing to my cheek.

"Monsieur le général," said I, with a sternness of manner which secured their respect, "will, I trust—in memory of that day at Maida—be so generous as to send me, on parole, to Messina, where I may treat about an exchange. By doing so, he will confer a lasting obligation, which the fortune of war may soon put it in my power to repay."

"I deeply regret that to General Regnier I must refer you—he, alone, can grant your request. As we move instantly on Scylla, you must be transmitted to headquarters without delay, and under escort. Appearances are much against you, but I trust matters will be cleared up. Chataillion," said he to his aide, "help the gentleman to wine and a cigar, while I write a rough outline of this affair to monsieur le général."

Commanding my feelings and features, I drank a glass or two of wine, while the general, taking pen and ink from his sabretache, wrote a hasty note to Regnier.

"Chataillion," said he, while folding it, "order a corporal and a file of lances."

The vicomte went up to the first regiment of the brigade, and returned with the escort.

"In the charge of these soldiers, you must be sent to Seminara, where I trust your parole will be accepted, in consequence of this note; though monsieur le général and monseigneur le maréchal, are far from being well disposed towards you, especially for the last affair with the voltigeurs of the 23rd. Ah! Regnier's son Philip was shot at Bagnara—poor boy! Adieu! May we meet under more agreeable circumstances," and giving the letter to the corporal, Compere sprang into his saddle, and left me. His aide-de-camp, the Vicomte de Chataillion, seeing how deeply I was cast down, expressed regret at having been my capturer. "But monsieur will perceive," said he, with a most insinuating smile, "that I was only doing my duty. You cannot travel on foot with a mounted escort—it would be dishonourable, and as I have a spare horse, you are welcome to it; on reaching Seminara, or even the frontiers, you can return it with the corporal. Adieu!" And we parted.

The frontier! distraction! I could scarcely thank the young Frenchman; but memory yet recalls his gallant presence and commanding features—one of the true old noblesse. How different he was from Pepe, Regnier, Massena, and many others, whom the madness and crimes of the Revolution had raised to place and power, from the dregs of the French people.

With a little ostentation, the lancers loaded their pistols before me, and in five minutes I was *en route* for Seminara, with a file on each side, and the corporal riding behind. I often looked back; Compere's brigade were riding in sections towards the hills, with all their lance-heads and bright accoutrements glittering in the sun, while the fanfare of the trumpets, the clash of the cymbals, and the roll of the kettledrums, rang in the woods of Palmi. They were moving towards Scylla, and my heart swelled when I thought of my helplessness, and of poor Bianca; the hope of Regnier accepting my parole alone sustained me, but that hope was doomed to be cruelly disappointed.

By the way, we passed many ghastly objects, which announced the commencement of that savage war of extermination, which General Manhes afterwards prosecuted in the Calabrias. Many armed peasantry had been shot, like beasts of prey, wherever the French fell in with them, and their bodies hung on the trees we passed under, while their grisly heads were stuck on poles by the roadside. Some were in iron cages, and, reduced to bare skulls, grinned through the rusty ribs like spectres through barred helmets; while the birds of prey, screaming and flapping their wings over them, increased the gloomy effect such objects must necessarily have upon one's spirits.

The morning was balmy and beautiful, the sun hot and bright, the sky cloudless, and of the palest azure; light fleecy vapour floated along the distant horizon, where the sea lay gleaming, in green and azure; but never had I a more unpleasant ride than that from Compere's bivouac. I often looked round me, in the desperate hope that a sudden attack of robbers, or loyal paesani, would set me free, though warned by the corporal, that on the least appearance of an attempt at rescue, he would shoot me dead. But Regnier had effectually cleared and scoured the

country, and we passed no living being, save an old Basilian pilgrim, travelling barefooted, perhaps on his way to the Eternal City; and once, in the distance, a solitary bandit on the look-out, perched on the summit of a rock, like a lonely heron. The bells of the mountain goats, the hum of the bee, or the flap of the wild bird's wing, and the dull tramp of our horses on the grassy way, alone broke the silence. My escort were solemn and taciturn Poles, who never addressed a word either to me or to each other; so my gloomy cogitations were uninterrupted till we entered Seminara, when the scene changed.

The town was crowded with soldiers, and all the populace had fled; cavalry, infantry, artillery, sappeurs, voltigeurs, and military artisans, thronged on every hand; shirts and belts were drying at every window, and the air was thickened by pipe-clay and tobacco-smoke, while the sound of drums, bugles, and trumpets, mingled with shouts and laughter, rang through the whole place—noise and uproar reigning on all sides. The great Greek abbey and cathedral were littered with straw, for cavalry horses; the principal street was blocked up by waggons, caissons, tumbrils, pontoons, mortars, and the whole of that immense battering-train, concentrated for the especial behoof of my brave little band at Scylla, whither it would be conveyed the moment the roads were completed.

A strong guard of grenadiers, stationed before the best house in the town, announced it to be the quarters of the general. They belonged to the 62nd of the French line. In front of the mansion stood thirty pieces of beautiful brass cannon, the same which the French threw into the sea on abandoning Scylla, when, in the year following, the British beleaguered it under Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, 27th regiment. I was ushered by the corporal into the general's presence, and found him just finishing breakfast; he had pushed away his last cup of chocolate, placed his foot on the braciere, and was composing himself to resume reading the *Moniteur*, while his servant, a grenadier, in blue uniform, with rough iron-grey moustaches, cleared the table. On the wall, hung a bombastic bulletin of Napoleon, dated 27th December, 1806:—

"The Neapolitan dynasty has ceased to reign! its existence is incompatible with the repose of Europe, and the

honour of our crown. Soldiers, march, and *if* they will await your attack, drive into the sea those feeble battalions of *the tyrants of the ocean*—lose no time in making all Italy subject to my arms!"

Probably the *Moniteur* contained some unpleasant account of our brilliant success in other parts of the world, for the temper of the general was soured, and he regarded me with a most vinegar-like aspect, when the corporal ushed me in. I bowed coldly; he answered only by a stern glance, spread his hands behind his coat-tails, and leaned against the mantelpiece.

"Ouf! a prisoner of war," said he, and scanning me at intervals, while reading the letter of Compere.

"Your name and rank?"

"Dundas, captain of the 62nd regiment of the line, and commandant of the castle of Scylla, for his Majesty Ferdinand IV."

"Ouf! the very man we wanted! You were caught on the shore, near Palmi?"

"Yes, when left there by the boat of the *Electra* frigate, and merely meaning to make a reconnoissance (until daybreak enabled us to put to sea), I penetrated—"

"A deuced lame story! Bah! you were merely making a reconnoissance at Canne too, I suppose? Ha! ha! well, we will cure you of that propensity, for the future."

"I request to be liberated on my parole."

"A spy on parole! Ouf!"

"Scoundrel!" I exclaimed, losing all temper, "I am a gentleman—a British officer."

"Sacre coquin! men of honour do not prowl in the rear of an enemy's *chaîne de quartiers* in disguise; where is your uniform?"

I gave him a scornful glance, in reply.

"Ouf!" said he, "you came to see our arrangements for capturing your crow's-nest at Scylla. Behold, then, our pontoons, our battering-train, our brigades of infantry and sappers; I trust you will report to monseigneur the prince of Essling, that they are all ready for instant service."

"Monsieur, I demand my parole."

"If Massena grants a parole, he may, but not so Regnier; you must be sent to the marshal, and I believe he is

most likely to give you a yard or two of stout cord, and a leap from the nearest tree."

"Such conduct would not surprise me in the least," I answered, bitterly: "the savage military government, which dragged the Duc d'Enghien from a neutral territory, and after a mockery of judicial form shot him by torchlight at midnight, and which so barbarously tortured to death a British officer, in the Temple, at Paris, must be capable of any inhumanity. After the ten thousand nameless atrocities by which France, since the days of the Revolution, has disgraced herself among the nations of Europe, no new violation of military honour, of humanity, or the laws of civilized nations, can be a subject of wonder."

"Ah, faquin! I could order you to be hanged in ten minutes."

"A day may yet come when this ruffianly treatment shall be repaid."

"Ouf! monsieur mouchard, Massena will look to that. At Castello di Bivona, you will be embarked on board *La Vigilante*, courier gun-boat, commanded by Antonio Balotte. He is a rough Lucchese, that same Antonio who will string you to the yard-arm, if you prove troublesome. Ouf! if the emperor was of my opinion, his soldiers would not take any prisoners." He grinned savagely, and summoned his orderly.

"Order a corporal and file of soldiers. To them," he continued, addressing the lancer, "you will hand over the prisoner, with this brief despatch, for Marshal Massena, at Cosenza; it states who he is, and the suspicions against him."

Massena! O, how little I had to hope for, if once in the clutches of that savage and apostate Italian, particularly when blackened by all that Regnier's malicious nature might dictate. In half an hour, I was on the march for Castello di Bivona, escorted by a corporal, and file of the 101st, with fixed bayonets. As a deeper degradation, Regnier had ordered me to be handcuffed. Heavens! my blood boils yet at the recollection of that! I would have resisted, but a musket levelled at my head silenced all remonstrance, and I bottled up my wrath, while Corporal Crapaud locked the fetters on me. We marched off, my exasperation increasing as we proceeded, for the escort

seemed determined to consider me in the character of a spy, and consequently treated me with insult and neglect; in vain I told them I was a British officer, and deserved other treatment.

"True, monsieur," replied the corporal, who was a dapper little Gaul, four feet six inches high, "but I am obeying only the orders of the general; and a British officer, or any other officer, who is caught among an enemy's cantonments in disguise, must be considered as a spy, and expect degradation as such. Monsieur will excuse us—we have orders not to converse with prisoners; and the general—ah! *ventre bleu*!—he is a man of iron!"

This coolness, or affectation of contempt or superiority, only increased my annoyance. Although the soldiers conversed with all the loquacity and sung with all the gaiety of Frenchmen, they addressed me no more during the march of more than twenty-five miles. This lasted seven hours, exclusive of halts at Gioja, Rossarno, and several half-deserted villages and shepherds' huts, where they extorted whatever they wanted, at point of the bayonet, and made good their quarters whenever they chose; browbeating the men and caressing the women (if pretty). I often expected a brawl, and perhaps a release; but all hope died away, when, about sunset, we entered Castello di Bivona: my spirit fell in proportion as the plains and snow-capped Apennines grew dark, when the red sun dipped into the Tyrrhene Sea.

There were no French troops in the town; but, anchored close to the shore, lay the French gun-boat *La Vigilante*, mounting a six and a fourteen-pounder, and having thirty-six men—quite sufficient to hold in terror the inhabitants of the little town, who had not forgotten the visit paid them by Regnier's rear-guard. My heart sickened when, from an eminence, I beheld *La Vigilante*, which was to bear me further from liberty and hope; and the most acute anguish took possession of me, when confined for the night and left to my own sad meditations. I understood that I was to be transmitted to the Upper Province with some other prisoners, who were to arrive from Monteleone in the morning, and be conveyed across the Gulf of St. Eufemio by the gun-boat.

I found myself confined for the night in the upper

apartment of a gloomy tower, formed of immense blocks of stone, squared and built by the hands of the Locrians. The chamber was vaulted, damp, and destitute of furniture; but a bundle of straw was thrown in, for my couch, by Corporal Crapaud: he, with the escort, occupied a chamber below, where they caroused and played with dominoes. A turf battery of four twenty-four pounders, facing the seaward, showed that the French had converted this remnant of the ancient Hipponium into a temporary fort: a trench and palisade surrounded it.

A single aperture, a foot square, four feet from the floor, and crossed by an iron bar, admitted the night breeze and the rays of the moon; showing the dark mountains, the blue sky, and the sparkling stars.

Left to solitude, my own thoughts soon became insupportable. "At this time yesternight, I was with Bianca!" To be separated from her for an uncertain time—perhaps for ever, if Regnier's threats were fulfilled by the relentless Massena; to be taken from my important command at a time so critical—when the last stronghold of the British in Calabria was threatened by a desperate siege, on the issue of which the eyes of all Italy and Sicily were turned; the imminent danger and degrading suspicions under which I lay, manacled and imprisoned like a common felon; threatened on the one hand with captivity, on the other with death; and, worst of all, the image of Bianca, overwhelmed with sorrow and horror by the obscurity which enveloped my fate: all combined, tortured me to madness. I was in a state bordering on distraction. Stone walls, iron bars, and steel bayonets: alas! these are formidable barriers to liberty.

Midnight tolled from a distant bell, then all became still: so still, that I heard my heart beating. Deeming me secure, my escort were probably sleeping over their cups and dominoes. I was encouraged to attempt escaping, and endeavoured to rally my thoughts. Though half worn out by our long march over detestable roads—a journey rendered more toilsome by the constrained position of my fettered hands—I became fresh and strong, and gathered courage from the idea. Yonder lay the *Vigilante*, with her latteen sail hanging loose; and the sight of her was an additional spur to exertion: once on board of her, every hope was cut off for ever.

The detested fetters—two oval iron rings secured by a padlock and bar—were first to be disposed of: but how? The manner in which they secured the wrists crippled my strength: the iron bar was a foot long, and though defying my utmost strength to break or bend it, yet ultimately it proved the means of setting me free. The padlock was strong and new: but a happy thought struck me; I forced it between the wide and time-worn joints of the wall until it was wedged fast, as in a vice, then, clasping my hands together, I wrenched round the bar, using it as a lever on the lock, which passed through it; and in an instant the bolt, the wards, the plates which confined them, and all the ironwork of the once formidable little engine, fell at my feet.

"God be thanked! oh, triumph!" burst in a whisper from my lips: my heart expanded, and I could have laughed aloud, while stretching my stiffened hands. But there was no time to be lost: the fall of the broken padlock might have alarmed the escort, and I prepared for instant flight. Thrusting some of the iron pieces under the door bolts, to prevent it being readily opened, I turned to the window, and found, with joy, that there was space enough between the cross-bar and the wall for egress: but the ground was fifteen feet below. With great pain and exertion, I pressed through, and, half suffocated, nearly stuck midway between the rusty bar and stone rybate. At that moment of misery and hope, the corporal thundered at the door; I burst through, fell heavily to the ground, and for a moment was stunned by the fall: but the danger of delay, and the risk of being instantly shot, if retaken, compelled me to be off double-quick. I rushed up the banquette of the gun-battery, cleared the parapet at a bound, and scrambled over the stockade like a squirrel.

"Vilain, hola! halte!" cried Crapaud, firing his musket. The ball whistled through my hair, and next moment I was flying like a deer with the hounds in full chase. I was closely pursued; but, after three narrow escapes from the bullets of my escort, I baffled them, and gained in safety the cork-wood of Bivona.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE ALBERGO.—THE BANDIT'S REVENGE.

SEEKING a thick and gloomy dingle, I flung myself under its shadow to rest; breathless with my recent exertion, the long day's march, and the excitement of the last hour. My plan was soon decided: to approach Scylla, from which I was then nearly thirty miles distant, was my principal object; but many dangerous obstacles were to be encountered and overcome, before I stood in the hall of Ruffo Sciglio. The snow melting among the Apennines had swollen the Metramo and other rivers which I had to pass; the towns, villages, and all the level country swarmed with French troops and Buonapartist sbirri or gendarmes, all closing up towards the point of attack; while the woods and mountains were infested by banditti, the most ferocious and lawless in Europe. To lie concealed in thickets by day, and to travel by night, was the plan I proposed adopting; and anxious to find myself as far as possible from the place of my imprisonment, after a brief rest I set forward on my dubious and difficult journey, thinking more of the joy of embracing Bianca, than the triumph of meeting Regnier in the breach.

Many of the mountains being yet capped with snow, rendered the air cold and chilly; my head was without covering, and I was destitute of every means of defence against either robbers or wolves: the last were numerous in these wilds, and I often heard their cries rising up from the depths of the moonlit forest, through which I toiled southward. So wearying, difficult, and uncertain was the path, that I had only proceeded seven or eight miles when day broke, and found me in an open and desert place near Nicotera. The appearance of a body of the enemy marching down the hills was sufficient to scare me, and, seeking shelter in an orange-wood, I lay concealed in it for hours, not daring to venture forth, although I felt the effects of an appetite sharpened by the keen mountain air. I had heard much of the manna said to be found in the morning on the leaves of the mulberry and other trees in Calabria; but not a drop was to be seen, although I searched anxiously

enough. The day seemed interminably long, and joyfully I hailed eve closing as the sun sank once more behind Sicily, and the long shadows of Nicotera fell across the plain.

Armed with a stout club, torn from a tree, I once more set forward, favoured by the dusk and refreshed by my long halt, though hungry as a hawk.

At the hut of a poor charcoal-burner I received some refreshment, and ascertained the right (or rather safest) path; the honest peasant, on partly learning the circumstances of my escape, shouldered his rifle, stuck a poniard in his girdle, and accompanied me as far as Gioja; where, after showing me from the heights the French watch-fires at Seminara, he left me. I was pleased when he did so, for then only I became convinced that his intentions were honest. While travelling with him unarmed, I was somewhat suspicious of his kindness: but I did him wrong; he was a hardy and loyal Calabrian, and my fears were groundless. Regretting having brought him so far from his hut, I gave him three crowns, nearly all the money in my possession. At first he refused it; but the temptation was too great for the poor peasant, whose only attire was a jacket of rough skin, a pair of tattered breeches, the net which confined his ample masses of hair, and the buff belt sustaining his dagger and powder-horn. Muttering something about his little ones at home, he took the reward, with many bows and protestations, and we parted.

Rejoicing in my progress, I struck into a path up the hills towards Oppido. The utmost circumspection was now necessary, every avenue to Scylla being closely guarded by Regnier's piquets and chain of advanced sentries. About midnight, I lost my way among the woods and defiles. I was drenched by falling into a swampy rice plantation, and severely cut and bruised by the rocks and roots of trees, the night being so dark that I could scarcely see my hand outstretched before me. A sudden storm of rain and wind, which swept down from the hills, completed my discomfiture; and I hailed with joy a light which twinkled at the bottom of a deep and savage dell, seeming, from the eminence on which I stood, like a lantern at the bottom of a pit.

It proved to be an albergo, or lonely mountain-inn,

but of the most wretched description. Exhausted and weather-beaten as I was, the many unpleasant stories I had heard of those suspicious places, and the close connection of their owners with the banditti, occurred to me; but this did not discourage me from knocking at the door. Close to it stood a lumbering, old-fashioned, Sicilian carriage, which announced a visitor of some importance; and the moment I knocked, a violent altercation ensued as to whether or not the door should be opened.

"Signor Albergatore," cried a squeaking voice, "open the door at your peril! Open it—and I shall lay the whole affair before his excellency the president of the grand civil court."

The innkeeper uttered a tremendous oath, and opened the door. A blazing fire of billets and sticks roared up the opening which served for a chimney, and filled the whole albergo with a ruddy light. The host, a most forbidding-looking dog, with only one eye, a lip and nose slashed by what appeared to have been a sword-cut, and which revealed all his upper teeth, growled a sullen welcome; evidently nowise pleased with my splashed and miserable appearance. But I was resolved to make good my billet, and drawing close to the fire, took a survey of the company. It consisted of an important little personage, whose face seemed the production of a cross between the rat and weasel; a jovial young fellow, whose jaunty hat and feather, green velvet jacket, and breeches of striped cotton, rosy and impudent face, together with his little mandolin, declared him to be a wandering improvisatore; and an old monk of St. Christiana (the neighbouring town), who lay fast asleep in a corner, with his hands crossed on his ample paunch, his shaven scalp shining like a polished ball in the light of the fire, which made his white hair and beard glisten like silver as they flowed over his coarse brown cassock.

The little personage before mentioned, was Ser Villani, the great notary of St. Eufemio: a more apt plunderer of King Ferdinand's subjects than any robber in Calabria: he was a thorough-paced lawyer, and consequently a knave. Armed with a pass, which for a certain consideration he had obtained from General Regnier, he was on his way from Gierazzo, where he had been collect-

ing information relative to an interminable process. The grand civil court of Palermo was putting every judicial instrument in operation to plunder the rich prince of St. Agata, at the suit of a neighbouring abbey of monks, whose relicario he was bound to keep in repair; he having neglected to enclose the parings of the nails of San Gennaro in a gilt box, these inestimable reliques were lost, and his altezza was deprived of his cross of the saint's order, and became liable to swinging damages. All his notes on this most interesting case, Ser Villani carried in a legal green bag, which he grasped with legal tenacity; and he looked at me from time to time with glances of such distrust and dislike, that I concluded it contained more than mere paper.

Three well-armed and wild-looking peasants were sleeping in a corner, and the host wore a long knife in his girdle. Forbidding as he was in aspect, his wife and daughter were still more so; their clothes exhibited a strange mixture of finery and misery—massive silver pendants and gold rings, chains, rags, and faded brocades; while their feet were shoeless. My suspicions increased, and I found I had got into a lion's den.

"Signore Albergatore," said I, "do you fear banditti, that you were so long in undoing the door?"

"'Twas the Signor Scrivano who raised so many objections," he replied, sulkily.

"Had Master Villani known I was a cavalier of Malta escaping from the French, he might have been a little more hospitable," I replied, to deceive them as to my real character; for I dreaded being given up to Regnier, perhaps for the sake of a reward. "Who occupy the mountains hereabout?"

"Scarolla and Baptistello Varro," replied the host. "But they never visit so poor an albergo as this."

"I hope not," faltered the notary, who turned ghastly pale at the name of Varro; and muttering to himself, he glanced uneasily at us all, with eyes that glittered like those of a monkey. "Ah, when will that loitering scoundrel of a postilion return with a smith, to repair the calesso? Hound! he contrived very opportunely that the wheel should come off close by the albergo; but let him beware; his neck shall pay the forfeit, if worse comes of this."

A quiet laugh spread over the host's face, like sunshine over a field.

"Ser," said the improvisatore, "your postilion is probably only away to the next hill; and when he returns, a score of riflemen will be at his back."

The little notary quaked; and although the cunning minstrel merely spoke in jest, his suppositions were indeed too correct. The secret understanding which existed between the brigands, postilions, and innkeepers of South Italy, was notorious; it has formed the machinery of innumerable tales of fiction. But since the campaign of Manhes, and the close of the war, Italy has been quite regenerated.

The improvisatore received a furious glance from the host, that confirmed my suspicions; but to retire now was almost impossible.

After a miserable supper had been washed down by a caraffa of tart country wine, we drew closer to the smoky fire, and composed ourselves round it for the night. The wife and daughter of the host retired to a kind of loft above; resigning the only bed in the house,—viz., a bag of leaves and a blanket or two, to the priest. The notary nodded over his green bag, and though he started at every sound, pretended to be fast asleep.

Notwithstanding my fatigue, thoughts stole over me and kept me awake; and more than once I saw the dark glassy eye of the host observing me intently from the gloomy corner where he lay on the tiled floor. In short, not to keep the reader any longer behind the curtain, we were in one of those infamous dens which were the resort of the brigands, to whom the keepers conveyed information of all travellers who passed the night with them, stating whether they were armed, or escorted by soldiers or sbirri. The suspicious improvisatore again whispered to me that he had no doubt the notary's postilion was only away to summon his comrades, the banditti. Reflecting that I was unarmed, I felt the utmost anxiety, but retiring might only anticipate matters; the fellows asleep in the corner were well armed, and I saw the hilts of their knives and pistol-butts shining in the light of the fire.

"I am glad we have a cavalier of Malta here to-night," whispered the lad with the guitar. "You may save

us all from Baptistello, if he pays us a visit—all, one excepted; but, signor, you have very much the air of an Englishman."

"I served with the English fleet when it assisted the knights at the siege of Valetta. But I hope the rogues will not carry me off in expectation of a ransom."

"Madonna forbid! But Heaven help poor Villani, if he fall into the clutches of Baptistello!"

"Why so?"

"Signor, it is quite a story!" said he, drawing closer, and lowering his voice. "Baptistello was a soldier of the Cardinal Ruffo, and served in his army when it defeated the French in the battle of Naples, on the happy 5th of June. His father, Baptiste, was a famous bravo and capo-bandito, who infested the mountains above St. Agata, and was the terror of the province from Scylla to La Bianca. He boasted that he had slain a hundred men; and it is said, that in order to rival the frightful Mammone, he once quaffed human blood. He was deemed bullet-proof; a charm, worn round his left wrist, made him invulnerable; and he escaped so often and so narrowly, that he soon thought so himself. His presence inspired terror, and no man dared to travel within twenty miles of his district without a numerous escort. The prince of St. Agata, lord of that territory, alone treated his name with contempt, and daily drove his carriage through the wildest haunt of Baptiste, without attendants.

"One day they met: it was in a lonely valley near the Alece.

"'Stand!' cried the gigantic robber, kneeling behind a rock, over which he levelled his rifle. The reins fell from the hands of the driver.

"'Villain! fire, if you dare!' cried the prince.

"The robber fired, and his bullet passed through the hat of the prince, who levelling a double-barrelled pistol, shot four balls through the heart of his assailant. Before the arrival of the banditti, who with shouts were rushing down from the mountains, the prince was driving at full gallop through the valley, with the body of Varro lashed to the hind axle-bar, and trailing along the dusty road. Thus he entered Reggio in triumph, like Achilles dragging Hector round the walls of Troy. The

body was gibbeted, and the head placed in an iron cage and sent over to Messina; when it was stuck on the summit of the Zizi palace, where it yet remains, bleached by the dew by night and the sun by day: I saw it three days ago.

"One night, soon after this, a ragged little urchin presented himself in an apartment of the palace, just before the prince retired to rest.

"'Who are you, Messerino?' he asked.

"'Baptistello, the son of old Baptiste Varro.'

"'Ah! and what do you want?' said the prince, looking round him for a whip or cane.

"'My father's head.'

"'Away, you little villain, ere you are tossed out of the window! I would not give it for a thousand scudi.'

"'For two thousand, serenissimo?'

"'Yes, rogue, for so many I might.'

"'On your word of honour?'

"'An impudent little dog! Yes. Away!—when *you* fetch me such a sum, per Baccho! you shall have your father's head; but not till then.'

"'Enough, excellency; I will redeem it, and keep my word. San Gennaro judge between us, and curse the wretch who fails!'

"'A bold little rogue, and deserves the old villain's head for nothing,' muttered the prince. 'Two thousand scudi! Ah, poor boy! where will he ever get such a sum?'

"The prince soon forgot all about it; but Baptistello, inspired by that intense filial veneration for which our Calabrian youth are so famous, worked incessantly to raise the two thousand scudi—a mighty sum for him; but he did not despair. He dug in the vineyards and rice-fields by day, in the iron-mines of Stilo by night, and begged in cities when he had nothing else to do; and slowly the required sum began to accumulate. When old enough to level the rifle, by his mother's advice, he took to his father's haunts, and turned bandit. Then the gold increased rapidly; and, regularly as he acquired it, he transmitted the ill-gotten ransom to Ser Villani, of St. Eufemio; leaving the gold in the hollow of a certain tree, where the notary found it, and left a full receipt for each amount.

"When the two thousand pieces were numbered, Baptistello presented himself before Villani in the disguise of a Basilian, requesting him to pay Prince St. Agata the money and redeem the bare-bleached skull, which grins so horribly from the battlements of the Palazzo Zizi. They met at the porch of the great church, where the notary had just been hearing mass. He denied ever having received a quattrino of the money: not a single piece had he ever seen—'No, by the miraculous blood of Gennaro!'

"'Behold your signed receipts, Master Scrivano.'

"'Via! they are forgeries. Away, or I will summon the officers of justice.'

"'My two thousand scudi!—my hard-won money, earned at peril of my soul! Return it, thou most infamous of robbers!' cried the infuriated Varro, grasping the notary's throat, and unsheathing his poniard.

"'Help, in the name of the Grand Court!' shrieked Villani. Baptistello was arrested, imprisoned in the fearful *Damusi*, and kept there for months; he was then scourged with rods, and thrust forth, naked and bleeding, to perish in the streets, while the money, earned with so much toil and danger, went to enrich the dishonest notary. Baptistello is on the mountains above us; and if Villani falls into his hands this night, Signor Cavaliere, thou mayest imagine the sequel."

The improvisatore ceased, and I saw the keen, twinkling eyes of the notary watching me: he must have heard the whole story, while affecting to sleep, and, trembling violently, he clutched his legal green bag. Suddenly, some one tapped at the casement, and I saw a large, fierce, and grim face peering in.

"Ha!" cried the notary, springing up: "'tis the calessiero returned at last. Thou loitering villain! I will teach you how to respect a member of the grand civil court of Sicily."

He opened the door, and—horror!—instead of the humble and apologizing postilion, there stood the tall, athletic form of Baptistello Varro, clad in his glittering bandit costume. Had the notary encountered thus the great head of his profession, face to face, he could not have been more overwhelmed with dismay: he seemed absolutely to shrink in size before the stern gaze of the formidable robber, whose entrance scarcely less alarmed

the old priest, the poor improvisatore, and myself. But, remembering my former adventures with Varro, I was not without hope of escape. The albergo was crowded with his savage followers, and we were all dragged roughly forth as prisoners. The notary's hired calesso was undergoing a thorough search: the lining was all torn out, and every panel and cushion were pierced and slashed, while the contents of his trunks and mails were scattered in every direction, and flying on the breeze. In his green bag, were found a thousand ducats.

"Villain!" exclaimed Baptistello, as he threw the gold pieces on the sward, "there is more than we would deem sufficient to ransom ten such earth-worms as thee; yet this is but a half of the sum I deposited in the hollow tree at St. Eufemio. I am a robber—true: but I gain my desperate living bravely in the wilderness, by perilling my life hourly; while *thou*, too, art a thief, but of the most despicable and cowardly description—a legalized plunderer of widows and orphans—a vampire, who preys on the very vitals of the community—a smooth-faced masterpiece of villany: in short, wretch, thou art a notary. Remember the ransom of my father's head—the dungeons—the chains, and the scourge. Ha! remember, too, that thou art alone with me on the wild mountains of Calabria; so, kneel to the God above us, for the last sands of thy life are ebbing fast." And he dashed him to the earth.

"O signor—O excellency—mercy!" craved the notary, grovelling in the dust; but the fierce robber only grinned, showing his pearl-white teeth, as, leaning on his rifle, he surveyed him with an air of triumphant malice and supreme contempt. "Mercy! I implore you, by the blood of Gennaro the blessed! Mercy, as you hope for it at your dying day. I will repay the money. I will no longer be a notary, but an honest man."

"Wretch! such mercy will be given as tigers give," cried the ferocious Baptistello, spurning the poor man with his foot, and holding aloft his crucifix. "By this holy symbol of our salvation, I have sworn that thy head shall pay the forfeit for my father's." The brigand kissed it. Though all hope died away in the heart of the notary, he still poured forth a jargon of alternate prayers, threats, and entreaties: his agony was terrible, for, at that moment,

forty years of the "sharpest practice" were about to be accounted for.

"God! I dare not address myself to thee. O, holy father, pray for me in this great peril!" he cried, to the old monk of St. Christiana. "Supplicate Him for a sinner, that has forgotten how to pray for himself."

"Buono!" said Baptistello, "let the priest pray while the notary swings."

Lancelloti approached, and surveyed me with an insolent leer: he held a rope—the reins of the lawyer's mules; in a moment it was looped round the notary's neck, and the other end thrown over the arm of a beech-tree. The monk, kneeling on the sod, prayed with fervour—increased, probably, by anxiety for himself. The struggles of the poor wretch were horrible to behold: overcome with the terror of death, he fought like a wild beast, scratching, biting, and howling; but, in the strong grasp of his powerful destroyers, his efforts were like those of an infant. In a minute, he swung from the branch of the beech, while, with a stern smile of grim satisfaction, the robber watched the plunges of his victim, writhing in the death-agony—the sharp, withered features growing ghastly, as the pale light of the dawning day fell on their distorted lines. But enough.

"Signor Canonico," said Varro, "you may go; the mountains are before you—we meddle not with monks." The priest retired instantly, without bestowing a thought on his companions in trouble. "And who are you, signor, with the mandolin?" continued Baptistello.

"An improvisatore, from Sicily last, excellency," replied the lad, doffing his hat with all humility; "I have come to rouse my countrymen, by the song and guitar, to battle against the legions of Massena, as they did of old against the Saracen and Goth. I am but a poor lad, and have no ransom to offer, save a song of the glorious Marco Sciarra; not a paola can I give your excellencies: my sole inheritance is this guitar, which my father gave me with his dying hand (for he, too, was an improvisatore), when he fell in battle, under the banner of Cardinal Ruffo."

"Where, boy?"

"On the plains of Apulia: I was a little child then," said the lad, shedding tears. "See, the mandolin is stained with his blood."

"Benissimo!" exclaimed the band, who crowded round us.

"Thou, too, art free, for we war not with the poor. Away! follow the monk, and the Virgin speed thee." But the minstrel bestowed an anxious glance on me, and drew near, scorning to imitate the selfish priest, who had now disappeared from the path, which wound over the brightening mountains.

"Your name, signor?" asked Varro, surveying me with a glance of surprise, and seeming puzzled what to think of me.

"Dundas, captain in the British service, and commandant of Scylla," I replied, with haughty brevity.

"The friend of Castelermo, and who so bravely avenged his death on the renegade Navarro—is it not so?"

"The same, Signor Capo: for two days past, I have undergone great misery, and last night made a most miraculous escape from the troops of General Regnier."

"Who has offered a hundred gold Napoleons for you, dead or alive: a sum quite sufficient to excite the avarice and cupidity of a Calabrian outlaw."

My spirit sank—I made no reply, but cursed the French general in my heart.

"Courage, signor," said Baptistello, laying his hand familiarly on my shoulder; "think not so hardly of us: we all love the British soldiers, and would not yield you to Regnier for all the gold in France. We have not forgotten Maida—eh, comrades?"

"Viva il Re d'Inghilterra!" answered the band, with one voice. (It was the cry of the loyalists, as often as "Viva Ferdinando IV.")

"You hear the sentiments of my followers," said Varro; "truly, signor, as the husband of the Signora d'Alfieri, your name is dear to the whole Calabrians, and I believe the wildest rogue in these provinces would not touch a hair of your head. Corpo di Baccho! you must breakfast with us among the mountains: we trust to your honour for not revealing our fastness to our disadvantage—to our own hands for avenging it, if you do. Enough, signor! we know each other."

I was in the hands of men with whom it would have been rash to trifle, and, accepting the rough invitation, I accompanied them across the hills. The sun rose above

the highest peak of Bova, and poured its fiery lustre into the dark-green valleys, gilding the convent vanes and little spires of St. Christiana and Oppido, and exhaling the mist from the black glittering rocks, the sable pines, and verdant slopes of the Apennines.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE BANDIT'S CAVERN.—RECAPTURE AND DELIVERANCE.

THROUGH a long, deep gorge, winding between basaltic cliffs, the production of volcanic fire, or formed by some great convulsion which had rent the massive hills, we scrambled along for nearly half a mile; at the end, rose a wall of rock, on ascending which, by means of a ladder, I found myself in the den of the banditti. The ladder being drawn up when the last man ascended, all communication with the chasm below was thus cut off.

A fire burned brightly in a recess of the cavern, revealing its ghastly rocks and hollow depths, the long stalactites, the crystals, and various sparkling stones which glimmered in the flames as they shot upward through the cranny that served for a chimney. Several females, grouped round it, were engaged in chatting, quarrelling, and cooking; and their picturesque costumes, olive complexions, and graceful figures, were brought forward in strong warm light, by the flickering flames: some had still the sad remains of beauty, and their Greco-Italian features still wore the soft, Madonna-like expression of the southern provinces, though, alas! their innocence had fled; others were sullen, forbidding, or melancholy, and all were laden with tawdry finery and massive jewels.

The aspect of the cavern—one part glaring with lurid light, the other half involved in gloom, where its mysterious recesses pierced into the bowels of the mountain; the women, with their full bosoms, large black eyes, and sandalled feet, their glossy hair braided into tails, or flowing in dishevelled ringlets; the bearded banditti, some in their well-known costume, others in a garb of rough skins, showing their bare legs and arms—their rifles, knives, pistols, and horns, sparkling when they

moved—formed a striking scene. Looking outward, also, a view of the distant sea, the smoke of Stromboli piercing the infinity of space above it, the spire of Fiumara, the vine-clad ruins of a Grecian temple, and the long, bright river that wound between the hills towards it, formed a subject for the pencil, such as would have raised the enthusiasm of Salvator Rosa, who, in pursuit of the savagely romantic, sojourned for a time among the wilds, the beauties, the terrors, and the banditti of Calabria.

Chocolate, kid's flesh stewed, eggs, milk, dried grapes, and wine, composed the repast: when it was finished, the poor improvisatore, though not quite at ease, found himself compelled to sing, and chose for his theme Marco Sciarra, the glory of the Abruzzesi, whose fame and memory the honest man and the bandit alike extol. He sang in *ottiva rima*, and tinkled an accompaniment with his guitar, while every ear listened intently.

The scene opened in the wilds of Abruzzi; Marco was at the head of his thousand followers, and in all the plenitude of his power and terror—that chivalric brigandism which gained him the title of Re della Campagna; then we were told how, kneeling by the wayside, he kissed the hand of Tasso, and did homage to the muse; how successfully he warred with Clement VII. and the count of Conversano, and then fought the battles of the Venetians against their Tuscan enemies; of his bravery, his loves, his compassion, and countless escapes, we all heard in succession, down to that hour when, in the marches of Ancona, he met Battimello, his former friend, who, while embracing him, in the true spirit of Italian treachery, struck a dagger in his heart, and sold his head to a papal commissary.

Every eye flashed as the minstrel concluded; a groan of rage, mingled with a burst of applause, shook the vaulted cavern, for the theme was one well calculated to interest his hearers deeply, and one very pretty young woman threw her arms around the improvisatore, and kissed him on both cheeks. While all were thus well pleased, we took our departure, and were very glad when the cavern and its inmates were some miles behind us. On bidding adieu to Baptistello, I promised to have his father's head sent from Messina, if I lived to reach that

city in safety. He kissed my hand, and a dark smile lit up the features of Lancelloti: I was too soon to learn the ideas passing in the mind of that abominable traitor.

There is, generally, a romance about the Italian outlaw, which raises his character far above that of the mere pickpocket or housebreaker. The danger encountered in the course of his desperate profession, and the wild scenery around him, were all calculated to inspire him with a tinge of heroism: *were*, I say, for the real Italian brigand may now, happily, be classed with the things which are past. Without being guilty of any premeditated crime, many were forced upon that terrible career by the French invasion, or by too freely using their knives in those outbursts of anger and revenge to which the hot blood of the southern climes is so prone; but to some good feelings lingering in those hearts, which danger and despair had not completely hardened, I owed my safety in these various encounters with the wild bravos of Calabria.

But the most dangerous was yet to come. The reward offered by Regnier for my recapture had excited the avarice of Lancelloti, who was then tracking me over the hills, intent on my destruction. On parting with the improvisatore, close by where the poor notary yet hung, with the wild birds screaming round him, I continued my way, as warily as possible, to avoid the enemy; for a continual pop—pop—popping in the distance, and the appearance of white smoke curling on the mountain sides and from the leafless, though budding, forests, announced that the French advanced parties were skirmishing with the brigands and armed *paesani*, and kept me continually on the alert. Dread of the effect of Regnier's reward compelled me to avoid every man I met; so my route soon became equally toilsome and devious. Yet, though exhausted by travelling and loss of sleep, I was animated by a view of Scylla's distant towers and terraces, which rose above the woodlands gleaming in the rays of the joyous sun, and continued to press forward, until, completely overcome with fatigue, I threw myself on the green sward, under the cool shade of a pine thicket, and fell into a deep sleep.

This happy slumber, which, after a long march under

the scorching heat of noon, the cool shade rendered so refreshing, had lasted, perhaps, an hour, when I was roughly roused by the smart application of a rifle-butt to the side of my head. Starting up, I found myself in the grasp of Lancelloti and two others of Varro's band: alas! weary and unarmed, what resistance could I offer? They were strong, fresh, and armed to the teeth; solitude was around us, and no aid near: every hope of escape vanished.

"Via, Signor Inglese," said one; "did you mean to sleep there all day?"

"Beard of Mahomet!" said Lancelloti, with a scowl; "you had better make use of your legs."

"Your purpose, scoundrels?"

"To deliver you to the French commandant at Fiumara," replied the *ci-devant* priest and pirate. "Madonna! a hundred pieces of gold are not to be despised. Look you, signor; I swear by the light of Heaven to blow your brains out on the first attempt to escape!—so fill the foreyard—maladetto! Remember, I am Osman Carora—ha! ha!"

"Wretch! would you murder me in cold blood, and thus add to the guilt accumulated on your unhappy head?"

"Cospetto! it is indeed mighty," said he, gloomily; "yea, enough to darken the stone of Caaba, which was once white as milk, but now, blackened by the sins of men, is like a piece of charcoal in those walls where Abraham built it. When a devout Turk, I—via! on—or a brace of balls will whistle through the head you may wish should reach Fiumara on your shoulders—ha, ha!"

To resist was to die; so, relying on the humanity of the French officer commanding the outposts, I accompanied them, in indescribable agony of mind. The fading rays of the setting sun, as it sank behind the hills, were reddening the massive towers and crenellated battlements, the terraced streets and shining casements of Scylla. It vanished behind the green ridges; the standard descended from the keep, and my heart sank as we neared Fiumara. My escort kept close by me, with their rifles loaded. A river, the name of which I do not remember, winds from these hills towards Fiumara; and we moved along its northern bank. Its deep, smooth current lay on the left side of the

narrow path, and precipitous rocks, like a wall, rose up on the right; so that I was without the slightest hope of effecting an escape. I spoke of the greater reward they would receive on conducting me to Scylla: but they laughed my words to scorn. The French out-piquets were now in sight; and, far down the valley, we saw their chain of advanced sentinels, motionless on their posts, standing with ordered arms, watching the still current of the glassy river, as it swept onwards to the sea: its bright surface reflected the steep rocks, the green woods, and a ruined bridge, so vividly, that the eye could not distinguish where land and water met. The last flush of day, as it died away over the Apennines, cast a yellow blaze on its windings; which at intervals were dotted by the fitful watch-fires of the out-lying piquets.

A party of armed men had been seen by Lancelloti pursuing the turnings of the path we trod. They came towards us. Their conical hats and long rifles announced them Calabrians, and a consultation was held by my capturers whether to advance or retire, as it was quite impossible to leave the path on either hand.

"Go to the front, Gaetano, and reconnoitre," said Lancelloti; "they may be some of the Free Corps." My heart leaped at the idea.

"Cospetto! and if they are?"

"We shoot *him* through the head, plunge into the river, and swim for it!" said the other ruffian.

"Blockhead!" exclaimed Lancelloti, "they are but four, and the first lucky fire may make us more than equal. To *you*," addressing me with cruel ferocity, "I swear, by all the devils, you shall be shot the instant we are attacked—shot, I say, and flung into the river, that no one else may win those bright Napoleons which I hoped should clink in my own pouch."

At that moment, Gaetano came running back to say, that, although armed like the Free Calabri, with white cross-belts and heavy muskets, they wore no uniform or scarlet cockade.

"They must be free cavalieri of our own order, then," exclaimed Lancelloti. "Some of Scarolla's band, perhaps."

"They have been plundering of late, as far as Capo Pillari."

"Forward, then!"

Life and liberty were hanging by a hair. My heart beat tumultuously, and mechanically I moved forward, cursing the unsoldier-like malice of the French leader, who had placed me in such a position, by exciting the avarice of such wretches. After losing sight of the advancing party for a time, we suddenly met them, front to front, at an abrupt angle where the road turned round a point of rock.

"Advance first, Signor Inglese," said Lancelloti, "and, should you attempt to escape, remember!" and, tapping the butt of his rifle, he grinned savagely as I stepped forward, expecting every instant to be shot through the head. My brain was whirling—I was giddy with rage and despair. The path diminished to a narrow shelf of rock, about a foot broad. On one side, it descended sheer to the dark waters of the deep and placid river; on the other, frowned the wall of basalt; and I was compelled to grasp the tufts of weeds and grass on its surface, as I passed the perilous turn.

Scarcely had I cleared the angle, when I was confronted by—whom!—Giacomo, Lucca *labbruta*, and two other soldiers of Santugo in disguise. Their shout of joy was answered by a volley from three rifles behind me; and the report rang like thunder among the cliffs.

I heard the balls whistle past; a shriek and a plunge followed, as one of the Free Corps fell, wounded, into the stream. His comrades rushed on, to avenge him, and I drew aside behind an angle of the rocks, to avoid the cross fire of both parties. Enraged to behold the husband of their famous "Signora Capitanessa" in such a plight, Giacomo and his comrades pressed furiously forward with fixed bayonets. To this formidable weapon, the foe could only oppose the clubbed rifle, and a desperate conflict ensued. But on such ground it could not be of long duration. Blubber-lipped Lucca shot Lancelloti through the breast: he rolled down the steep rocks into the sluggish stream, above which his ferocious face rose once or twice amid the crimson eddies of his blood, then sank, to rise no more. Immediately after, his companions were bayoneted, and flung over the precipice after him.

Full of triumph at his victory and discovery, honest Giacomo skipped about on the very edge of the cliff, dancing the tarantella like a madman.

"Thrice blessed be our holy lady of Oppido, who led us this way to-night. O, happiness! O, joy to the capitanessa!" he exclaimed. "Ah, signor! you know not what she has endured. The whole garrison has been turned upside down. The Signora Bianca is distracted; the visconte, the Conte di Palmi, and Signor Olivero Lascelles have been incessantly beating the woods in search of you, so far as they dared venture. And Giacomo—O, triumph!—is the finder! It is an era in my life. Annina herself dare not be coy after this!"

Giacomo's Italian enthusiasm displayed itself in a thousand antics; and it was not until we saw a party of the French tirailleurs (whom the firing had alarmed) advancing up the opposite bank to reconnoitre, that we prepared to retire. It was now night: favoured by the moon, we forded the river at a convenient place, and, taking our way through the woods between Fiumara and Scylla, we eluded the vigilance of the French piquets. In an hour, I found myself safe within the walls, gates, and gun-batteries of my garrison, where my sudden return caused a burst of universal joy.

Breaking away from Luigi, my brother-officers and soldiers, who crowded clamorously round me, I hurried to the apartments of Bianca. All was silent when I entered, and the flickering rays of a night-lamp revealed to me the confusion my absence had created. Bianca's music, her guitar, her daily work, the embroidery, her books and drawings, lay all forgotten, and, huddled in a corner, poor papagallo croaked desolately in his cage: for he, too, had been deserted, and his seed-box was empty. A row of vases, which Bianca used to tend every day, had been forgotten, and the flowers had drooped and withered. The whole sleeping-chamber wore an air of disorder and neglect: her bed appeared not to have been slept in since I had left; for my scarlet sash lay on it, just where I had thrown it the night I left Scylla.

Above all, I was shocked with the appearance of the poor girl. Reclining on a sofa, she lay sleeping on the bosom of Annina; who also was buried in a heavy slumber: both were evidently wearied with watching and sorrow. Bianca was pale as death. Her beautiful hair streamed in disorder over her white neck and polished shoulder; and shining tears were oozing from her long

dark lashes. She was weeping in her sleep, and the pallor of her angelic beauty was rendered yet stronger by comparison with the olive brow and rosy cheeks of the waiting-maid.

I was deeply moved on beholding her thus: but I never felt so supremely happy as at the moment, when, gently putting my arm round her, I awoke her to joy, and dispelled those visions of sorrow which floated through her dreams.

CHAPTER LXV.

JOYS OF A MILITARY HONEYMOON.

EARLY next morning, I was roused by the sharp blast of a French trumpet stirring all the echoes of Scylla. I was dressing hastily, when Lascelles, who commanded the barrier-guard, entered, saying that a flag of truce, and a trumpet, sent by General Regnier, required a conference with the commandant.

"Curse Regnier," said I testily, while dragging on my boots; "I will not hold any communication with him, after the scandalous manner in which he has treated me."

"But you may receive the officer, and hear that which he is ordered to communicate; at least, answer this letter, of which he is the bearer."

By the grey twilight of a February morning, I opened the Frenchman's despatch, and read:—

"SUMMONS

Of unconditional capitulation, and the articles thereof, agreed to between the commandant of Scylla and Monsieur le Général de Division, Regnier, Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, Knight-Commander of the Iron Crown of Lombardy, Grand Cross of the Lion of Bavaria, Knight of St. Louis of France, Chef de Bataillon of the Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard," &c. &c. &c.

"Bah!" cried Oliver, with a laugh, "throw it over the window."

"Give Monsieur le Général, Knight of St. Louis, and all that, my compliments, and say, I will return these articles with the first cannon-ball fired on his trenches."

"The enemy are close at hand this morning, and appear to have made great progress during the night."

"Desire the officer commanding the artillery, to have all the heavy guns loaded with tincase-shot, in addition to iron balls; and to have the primings well looked to."

"But the Frenchman—he is still waiting at the barriers—shall I show him up?"

"You may — I have a particular message to his general."

"He is a punchy, ungentlemanly kind of man, and appears to keep a sharp eye about him, evidently observing all our defences."

"Lodge the trumpeter in the main-guard, and bind up the eyes of the officer; they served me so once; I will meet him in the old hall."

That I might not be deficient in courtesy, I directed wine, decanters, &c., to be conveyed to the vaulted hall, where princely banners and Italian trophies had given place to racks of arms, iron-bound chests, and military stores. Oliver led in the officer, with his eyes covered by a handkerchief, which gave him rather a droll aspect. He was a short, thick-set man, with wiry, grey moustaches, and wore the uniform of the ill-fated voltigeurs of the 23rd regiment.

"Monsieur, you will no doubt pardon this necessary muffling," said I, advancing; "but as you wished to see me—ha!"—at that moment Oliver withdrew the bandage, when lo! imagine my astonishment on seeing the features of General Regnier! I knew him in an instant, although, instead of the blue coat and gold oak-leaves, the stars and medals of the general of the empire, he wore the plain light green and silver braid of the 23rd. His wonder was not less on recognizing me.

"Ouf! you have outflanked me—quite!" said he, bowing with a ludicrous air of confusion and assurance.

"Shame! shame, general!" I replied, with an air of scorn; "who is now the spy, and deserves to be hanged or shot?"

"Not I," said he, with *sang froid;* "I am the bearer of a flag of truce."

"In your *own* name? Good!"

"No; in that of Joseph I., king of Naples, and the marshal prince of Essling."

"A paltry pretence, under which you came hither to reconnoitre our works, our cannon, and means of resistance. Away, sir! Back to your position, and remember that one consideration alone prevents me from horsewhipping you as you deserve, for the manner in which you treated me at Seminara."

"Horsewhip—*mille baionettes!*" replied he, with eyes flashing fire; "I must have reparation for that; monsieur, be so good as to recall those words."

"Sir, remember your threats and the fetters."

"Ouf!" he muttered, shrugging his shoulders. "I am in the lion's den. You must meet me, monsieur."

"Yes, in the breach — sword in hand — begone, sir!"

"I go; but hear me. Remember the fate of the Italian commandant of Crotona. I swear, by God and the glory of France, that, like him, you shall die, and hang from these ramparts when the place surrenders. Our heavy gun-batteries will open at noon; you have but two hundred rank and file; for every one of these I can bring one piece of cannon, and a hundred soldiers — ouf! we shall eat you up. Before the sun sets to-night, my triumph shall be complete, and Calabria once more the emperor's."

And thus we parted, with the bitterest personal animosity. He retired with the bewildered Lascelles, who led him, blindfold, to the outer barrier, and, with his trumpeter, there dismissed him.

"By heaven!" he exclaimed, when he hurried back to me, "what a triumph it would have been to have sent the old fox over to Messina! Only think of Sherbrooke's flaming general order and address of thanks on the occasion. What on earth tempted you to let him go?"

"Flags of truce must be respected; but I had a hard struggle between etiquette and inclination. Desire the gunners of the guard to telegraph to the *Electra* and gunboats, to keep close in shore, and send my orderly to the Visconte di Santugo, saying I will visit him shortly."

The continual skirmishing of the peasantry and banditti with the French, had greatly retarded the operations of the latter; but on the 10th of February,—the infantry brigade of Milette's corps having descended from the Milia heights, and come within range of our cannon,—it became imperative to order off to Sicily the whole of the armed paesani who occupied the town of Scylla, as the bombarding operations of the besieging army would only subject them to destruction. While our batteries kept in check the soldiers of Milette, I superintended the embarkation of these brave fellows, and the remnant of Santugo's Free Corps, who were all received on board the Sicilian gun-boats, at the sea staircase. The visconte remained with me; but his volunteers, who afterwards distinguished themselves so much in our service, were quartered in Messina. Poor Giacomo was afterwards slain in the brilliant attack made by General Macfarlane, on the coast of Naples, in the July following. The Cavaliere Paolo, for his bravery on the same day, at the capture of the Castello d'Ischia, received the thanks of Ferdinand IV. and Sir J. Stuart, at the head of the army. He was afterwards created Conte Casteluccio, and shared his coronet with the fair widow of Castagno. He is now senior commandant of the Yäger guards, in the Neapolitan army.

I transmitted with the gun-boats the whole of the sick and wounded, and everything of value. I sent away my groom with my gallant grey, which was indeed far too good a nag to be captured and ridden by Frenchmen.

It was in vain that I entreated Bianca to go in safety with the boats, and described to her all the horrors of a siege; the noise of our guns playing on Milette's advancing column only confirmed the fond girl's determination to remain with us; and she seemed happy when the last gun-boat, laden to the water's edge with her countrymen, moved slowly away from the shore, and the only chance by which she could leave me was cut off for ever.

A safe place was fitted up for her by the soldiers in a bomb-proof chamber, where the thick walls and arches of solid masonry shut out the storm of war, which was soon to shake the towers of Scylla to their deepest foundations. The barriers of palisade were secured, the bridges drawn up, the standard hoisted, the guns double shotted with

balls, canister, and grape, the breastworks and ramparts lined, the locks and flints examined; and thus we awaited the enemy on the forenoon of the 10th; the roll of their brass drums rang among the hills, as the successive columns descended from the heights of Milia, taking the most circuitous routes, to avoid the fire of our cannon, which played upon their line of march at every opportunity afforded by the inequality of the ground.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE SIEGE OF SCYLLA.

My mind was a prey to the utmost anxiety, when I beheld the overwhelming masses which Regnier was pouring forward on the last solitary hold of Ferdinand, cut off by the stormy Strait of Messina from all Sicilian succour. A strong brigade of cavalry, the 23rd light infantry, the 1st, 62nd, and 101st regiments of the French line, together with a powerful battering-train, formed his force; but, as each corps consisted of three battalions, he mustered more than 6,000 foot alone. The "handful" of the British 62nd, amounting now to only 200 file, were to encounter them: but proud of my corps, and feeling all the glorious ardour of my profession glowing within me—relying on the indomitable English spirit of my soldiers, and the great natural strength of the position we occupied—I did not despair of at least protracting a siege, which, when the great disparity of numbers is remembered, must be deemed as glorious a deed of arms as our military annals exhibit.

On the morning of the 11th February, five 24-pounders, five 18-pounders, four mortars, and innumerable field-pieces, opened a tremendous cannonade on the keep and upper works of Scylla, to demolish our cover, and bury us with our guns under the ruins. This battering continued daily, without a moment's cessation, until the 14th; when, covered by it, the French sappeurs and artillerists formed two other breaching batteries, at two hundred yards' distance from our bastions, notwithstanding the appalling slaughter made among them by our shells bursting, and

grape-shot and musketry showering around, with deadly effect. Though the whole of Regnier's infantry remained under cover during these operations, the execution done on those who worked at the breaching batteries must have been fearful—they were so close and so numerous. My own brave little band was becoming thin from the fire from the heights—every cannon-shot which struck the stone walls was rendered, in effect, as dangerous as a shell, by the heavy splinters it cast on every side, and I foresaw that the castle of Ruffo—mouldering with the lapse of years, and shaken by the storms and earthquakes of centuries, would soon sink before the overwhelming tempest of iron balls which Regnier hurled against it from every point—his gunners stopping only until their cannon became cool enough to renew the attack. We had expected great assistance from our flotilla of gun-boats, which, by keeping close in shore, might have cannonaded the enemy's position, and shelled their approaches; but a storm of wind and rain, which continued without cessation or lull, from the time the attack began until it was ended, rendered an approach to Scylla impossible: the sea was dashing against it in mountains of misty foam, and on its walls of rock would have cast a line-of-battle ship like a cork.

The roar of the musketry, and the perpetual booming of the adverse battery-guns, produced a tremendous effect; awakening all the echoes of the fathomless caves of Scylla in the splintered cliffs and Mont Jaci, and, after being tossed from peak to peak of the Milia Hills, with ten thousand reverberations, all varying, the reports died away in the distant sky—only to be succeeded by others. The dense volumes of smoke that rose from the French batteries, were forced upwards and downwards by the stormy wind, and rolled away over land and sea, twisted into a thousand fantastic shapes, mingling on one side with the mist of the valleys, on the other, with the foam of the ocean. The continual rolling of the French brass drums, the clamour of their artillerymen, and the wild hallooing of their infantry, added to the roar of the conflict above and that of the surge below, increased the effect of a scene which had as many beauties as terrors.

The night of the 14th was unusually dark and stormy, and on visiting Bianca in her dreary vault (which, by

being below the basement of the keep, was the only safe place in the castle), she told me, with a pale cheek and faltering tongue, that often, of late, she had been disturbed by sounds rising from the earth below her. I endeavoured to laugh away her fears; but, on listening, I heard distinctly the peculiar noise of hammers and shovels, which convinced me that the French sappers were at work somewhere, and that the hollows of the rock had enabled them to penetrate far under the foundations of the castle. On examination, we found that for three nights they had been lodging a mine, during the noise and gloom of the storm, and had excavated two chambers: one, under our principal bastion; the other, under the keep—connecting them by a *saucisson*, led through a gallery cut in the solid rock—the effect of such an explosion would have ended the siege at once, and blown to atoms the vault appropriated to Bianca and her servant. My mind shrank with horror from contemplating the frightful death she had so narrowly escaped. Next night, the train would, undoubtedly, have been fired; and the inner chamber was pierced within three feet of her bed! * * *

Desiring Lascelles to prepare a counter-mine, in case of our failure, I slipped out by the barriers, accompanied by Santugo and twelve volunteers. Favoured by the darkness of the night, the howling of the stormy wind, and dashing of the "angry surge," we stole safely to the scene of operations, and with charged bayonets fell upon a brigade of sappeurs—as the French style a party of eight private artificers, under the command of a non-commissioned officer. They were all as merry as crickets, talking and laughing whilst working in their shirt sleeves.

They defended themselves bravely with their swords; but, as we possessed the mouth of the excavation, all retreat was cut off. The corporal, a strong athletic fellow, beat down Santugo's guard with a shovel, and striking him to the earth with the same homely weapon, broke through us, plunged down the rocks, and escaped; but the whole of his party were bayoneted, and, after utterly ruining and destroying the mine, we retreated within our gates, without losing a man, or firing a shot. The exasperation of the proud Santugo at the rough knock-down he received from the corporal is quite indescribable.

Next day the enemy pushed forward still closer to the

walls; led by my old acquaintance, De Bourmont, the 101st regiment had the temerity to advance round an angle of the rocks to the water's edge, for the purpose of destroying the sea staircase—our last, our only means of retreat. A cry burst from my soldiers; we brought every musket to bear upon that point, and depressed our cannon by wedges and handspikes; section after section of the enemy were swept into the sea, and they were therefore compelled to abandon the attempt, leaving half their number piled up on the rocky shore, killed or wounded, or drowned by falling from the narrow path, where many of the dead and dying were drenched, and swept away every instant by the sea.

As the mist rolled up from the mountains, we saw the shattered remains of the regiment—a dark mass, in grey great-coats, with the tops of their glazed caps and bayonet-blades glancing in the sun—retiring, double quick, beyond the eminence, which, to a certain extent, sheltered Regnier's infantry from our missiles; but their retreat was galled by them, and a line of prostrate bodies marked their route.

"Dundas, you shall see how I will unhorse that fellow," said the officer commanding our artillery, as he coolly adjusted the quoin under the breach of a long nine. He meant old Bourmont, who, like a brave fellow as he was, retreated in *rear* of his column, and was jogging along on his charger, whose drooping head, mulish ears, curved face, and shambling action, showed the thorough French horse. Before I could speak, the match fell on the vent, the gun was fired, and the aim was true—fatally so.

"A splendid shot, and a jewel of a gun," exclaimed my friend, exulting in his gunnery, as both horse and rider tumbled prone to the earth. "Will you try a shot, Dundas?"

"Thank you, no; you have killed the only man, amid all those ranks, I would have spared."

"By Jove! he is not settled yet," said Lascelles, with an air of disappointment, as the colonel disengaged himself from his fallen horse, and, heavily encumbered by his jack-boots, scrambled over the hill with as much expedition as his short legs and rotund form would permit. Both Oliver and the artillerist were chagrined at his escape;

and yet, in their quiet moods, both were men who would not have killed a fly.

At that moment, so critical to Bourmont, I heard a splitting roar—the rock shook beneath us, and we knew not which way to look. Shaken and rent by the salvos of heavy shot, which, for four successive days, had showered from the French batteries, an immense mass of wall, the curtain of our strongest bastion, rolled thundering to the earth, burying the poor artillery officer, Gascoigne, Serjeant Gask, a number of soldiers, and all our best cannon, under a mighty mountain of crumbled masonry. I was dismayed and grieved by this terrible catastrophe, which the French hailed with shouts of rapture and triumph; they redoubled their battering, with such effect on the shattered walls, that every time a ball struck, other masses gave way, burying soldiers and cannon beneath them. By sunset, every gun was entombed under the prostrate walls, and we had only musketry to trust to, in case of an assault, which I had no doubt would be attempted that very night, as the breach was quite practicable, and the continual cannonade prevented us from repairing it by fascines, or any other contrivance.

Some were now despairing, and all more or less dispirited; many an anxious glance was cast to Sicily, and to the sea which raged between us, as the lowering yellow sun sank behind the Neptunian hills, and the waves grew black and frothy.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE FALL OF SCYLLA.—CONCLUSION.

Night descended upon Scylla, upon the dark Apennines and the tempestuous sea, and my mind became filled with anxiety; our means of defence were greatly diminished, our shelter ruined. The stormy state of the weather cut off, equally, all hope of succour or escape, and I anticipated with dread a surrender to General Regnier, my personal enemy; by his orders, Santugo had little mercy to expect from Napoleon; and I knew not to what

indignities Bianca, as an Italian lady, might be subjected, if taken prisoner. Though crippled in means of resistance, and reduced in number, my few brave fellows would have defended the ruined breach till the last of them perished, but I saw that, ultimately, Scylla *must* become the prize of the enemy, and only trusted that, during a lull of the storm, we might effect a retreat to Messina by the flotilla of Sicilian gun-boats.

How changed now was the aspect of the venerable Scylla, since that morning when the French batteries first opened on it! The massive Norman battlements and its beautiful hall had crumbled into rubbish, or sunk in ponderous masses beneath the heavy salvos; every window and loophole was beaten into hideous gaps, and yawning rents split the strong towers from rampart to foundation. The well was choked up by the falling stones, and want of water increased the miseries of sixty wounded men, whom, ultimately, we had to abandon to the care of the enemy. Every cannon was buried, under the mighty piles of ruin, beyond recovery—all, save one thirteen-inch mortar, which I ordered to be dragged to the summit of the breach, where it afterwards did good service.

Many of the miserable wounded were destroyed under the falling walls, or buried, more or less, at a time when we could not spare a hand to extricate them; their cries were piteous, and their agonies frightful. The dead lay heaped up behind breastwork and banquette, and from the castle gutters the red blood was dropping on the sea-beaten rocks below, where the sea-mews and cormorants flapped their wings, and screamed over the sweltering corpses of the 101st. The artillerymen were almost annihilated, and their platforms were drenched in gore.

Though exhausted by the toil they had endured, the brave little band of survivors manned the breach, and remained under arms during the whole of a most tempestuous night, with that quiet cheerfulness, mingled with stern determination, which are the principal characteristics of our unmatched soldiery in times of peril. Towards midnight, Santugo (whom, with Lascelles, I had left in charge of the breach) aroused me from a nap I was snatching, rolled up in my cloak and ensconced under the lee side of a parapet.

"Signor, we have had an alert," said he, "a movement

is taking place amongst the enemy. They will be in the breach in five minutes."

I hurried to the mighty rent in our fortifications, and saw the long and perilous route which an escalade had to ascend—a steep and uncertain pathway, jagged with rocks, and covered with a thousand cart-loads of loose stones, mortar, and rubbish. It looked like a waterfall, as it vanished down the rocks into the gloom and obscurity below. The sky was intensely dark, and, though the wind howled, and the sea hissed and roared on the bluff headlands, the night seemed calm and still, after the battle-din of the past day.

A white mass, like a rolling cloud, was moving softly towards the breach, and Santugo was puzzled to account for the strange uniform; but I knew in a moment that it was an attack *en chemise*, and that the stormers were clad each in a white shirt, a garb sometimes adopted by the French when engaged in a night assault. Here our vigilance got the better of them.

The chemise is a short shirt, either with or without sleeves, worn over the accoutrements, reaching only to the flap of the cartridge-box, and is a very useful and necessary precaution, to prevent the stormers from mistaking each other in the darkness, horror, and confusion of a night assault.

Our drum (we had only one now) beat, and a volley of musketry was poured upon the breach from every point that commanded it. The flashes glared forth over the ruined parapets above and the loopholes of the casemates below, while our artillerymen, now that they had no longer cannon to work, stood by the howitzer, to sweep the breach, and showered rockets, hand-grenades, and red and blue lights on the advancing column. The bursting of the former retarded and confused them, while the lurid or ghastly glare of the latter showed us how to direct our fire. Many fire-balls alighted on the rocks, and blazed furiously, shedding over everything floods of alternate crimson and blue light, which had a magnificent yet horrible effect.

"Vive la gloire! Avancez! avancez, mes enfants!" cried the officer who led a wing of the French 62nd, and a wild cheer burst from his soldiers. It was the brave young Vicomte de Chataillion who headed "the Lost Children," and I saw with regret that he must fall.

"Forward the howitzer, to sweep the breach!" cried I to the artillerymen, who were every second falling down, killed or wounded, into the gap, before the fire of the French. "Forward—depress the muzzle, and stand clear of the recoil!"

Loaded with a bag containing a thousand musket-balls, the howitzer was run forward to the breach, over which its yawning muzzle was depressed and pointed.

"Fire!" cried the corporal. A little flame shot upward from the vent, a broad and vivid blaze flashed from the muzzle, and the report shook the ground beneath our feet. The effect of such an unusual and concentrated discharge of musket-shot on the advancing mass was awful and tremendous. By the light of the blazing fire-balls, we saw the sudden carnage in all its sanguinary horror. The dashing Chataillion, and more than two hundred rank and file, were swept away—literally *blown to pieces*—by the storm of leaden balls; and the remainder of his party retired on the main body in undisguised confusion and dismay.

"Well done, soldiers!" I exclaimed, with stern triumph, and feeling a wild glow of excitement, only to be felt in such a place and at such a time. "Ready the handspikes—back with the mortar—load again, and cram her to the muzzle with grape and tin-case shot, to sweep their column again!"

Again the brave French came headlong on, led now by jovial old De Bourmont; who, with the tricolour in one hand and his cocked hat in the other, scrambled up the loose stony breach in his clumsy jack-boots, with an agility astonishing in one of his years and size. The gold cross of the Legion, the silver badges of Lodi, Arcola, of Marengo, and other scenes of honourable service—his bald head and silver hair—shone amid the glaring fireballs and flashing musketry, as the desperate stormers swept on.

"Vive l'empereur! Avancez! Avancez!" cried he.

"*Tué tué!*" yelled the forlorn band; and the whole of Regnier's division sent up the *cri des armes* from the hills to heaven. On came the infuriated assailants—on—on—rushing up the frightful path; but the deadly fire we rained upon them, and the fast falling corpses (every bullet killing double) soon kept them thoroughly in check.

Regardless of danger, I stood on the summit of the

breach, that my soldiers might not want example. I felt the *wind* of the flying balls as they whistled past me; one carried away my right epaulette, a second broke the hilt of my sabre, and I lost a spur by a third.

"Soldiers, courage!" cried Santugo, who kept close by my side, and brandished his sabre with hot impatience; "courage, and they must again fly before you! Viva Ferdi—O, Madonna mia!" he suddenly ejaculated, in a gasping voice, as a ball struck him, and he sank at my feet. The soldiers at the howitzer dragged him back from the enemy's fire; and, as they did so, a musket bullet dropped from his left shoulder: he caught it, all dripping as it was with his blood, and, giving it to the corporal, exclaimed, like the soldier of Julian Estrado—"With *this* will I avenge myself! Signor Bombardiere, be so good as to load me a musket, and ram this bullet well home."

It was done in a twinkling; and, while from sheer agony his frame quivered and his teeth were clenched like a vice, he levelled the piece over the wheel of the howitzer, and shot poor De Bourmont, who fell dead, and rolled to the bottom of the rocks. The concussion threw Santugo backwards. But he was again dragged out of the press by the gunners, and taken to a sheltered place, where Macnesia attended to his wound.

The instant Colonel Bourmont fell, another officer snatched the tricolour from the hand of the corpse as it rolled past, and supplied his place; and once more the storming party rushed up the steep ascent, regardless as before of falling men and rolling stones, of the shot showered on them from every point, and the hedge of keen bayonets bristling at the summit of the breach above them.

"Long live Joseph, king of Naples! Tué! Tué! Vive la France!" They were again within a few yards of us, when the stern order, "Forward with the howitzer!" rang above the din. The artillery put their hands and shoulders to the wheels, and urged it to the breach; which was again swept by an irresistible storm of bullets. Once more the carnage was beyond conception horrible; and with a yell of rage and dismay, the stormers retreated precipitately beyond the eminence which sheltered their infantry.

On their flying, the incessant discharge of fire-arms,

which had rung for so many hours, died away for a time; and the rising sun revealed to us the carnage of the last night's conflict. The breach, the rocks, and approaches without the court, parapets and defences within, were covered with blood, and strewed with mangled bodies; but the ascent of the forlorn hope was terrible—no pencil could depict—no pen can describe it! The Frenchmen lay in piles of twenty and thirty; while scattered in every direction were seen the fragments of those who had perished by the discharges of the howitzer.

Taking advantage of the temporary cessation of hostilities, I ordered the breach to be repaired by piles of stones and rubbish, to form a breastwork; while another fatigue-party cleared away some of the ruins which buried our cannon and platforms. The soldiers raised a faint cheer—one gun was extricated. Alas! a trunnion was knocked off by the falling stones, and our labour had been in vain—it was useless. On seeing how we were employed, the French drums once more beat the *pas de charge*, and the attack was renewed with greater fury, and on two distant points at once. The 1st, 62nd, and 101st, again advanced to the breach, while a brigade of their second battalions, under General Milette, with ten or twelve field-pieces, assailed us on a point almost opposite; and the breaching battery, the field-brigade and mortars on the height, poured shot and shell upon us with remorseless determination. During the whole night and morning, the elemental war had continued with such unabated fury, that our gun-boats had been unable to leave the Sicilian coast; and I became convinced—but with sorrow and chagrin—that a capitulation was *inevitable*. I was about to order the gallant union to be hauled down, and the white flag of mercy hoisted; but before doing so, I conveyed a notice by telegraph to General Sherbrooke, in Sicily, acquainting him with my situation and intention.

"*Fight on—you will be rescued!*" was the answer we received. Almost immediately, after the storm lulled a little, and we saw the stately *Electra* standing, with her sails crowded, towards Scylla; while the flotilla, from the Faro, spread their broad latteens to the stormy wind. Animated by the prospect, and filled with desperate courage, once more we manned the deadly breach. Before,

we fought for honour and in the fulfilment of our duty; now, it was for life and liberty: and most effectually we kept the foe in check, until the gun-boats reached the sea-staircase; where Captain Trollope, of the *Electra*, with the men-of-war launches, arrived, to superintend the embarkation.

Aware of our intended escape, the enraged enemy did all in their power to frustrate it; the batteries, the brigades of field-pieces, and the battalions of infantry, poured their utmost fire upon the steep and narrow staircase (which was hewn out of the solid rock), on the ruined breach, the blood-stained ramparts, the corpse-heaped ditches, and the heaving boats: their drums rolled, and their shouts rent the air, while their frantic gunners worked their cannon like madmen.

Now, indeed, came the moment of my greatest dread and anxiety; to which all the rest had been child's play. Bianca—the poor drooping girl, now half dead with terror and exhaustion—had to be brought forth, with her attendant, and conveyed to the boats: to the boats, good God! And at that terrible time, when the concentrated fire of such a number of cannon, mortars, and musketry was poured upon Scylla; and especially on that steep and slippery stair which she had to descend. The 1st Legere, nearly a thousand strong, swept it with their fire. My heart became quite unmanned—I trembled; but it was for her alone.

"Oliver;" I cried to Lascelles; "see Bianca—see Mrs. Dundas to the boats; it is a duty with which I can hardly trust myself—I have the breach to defend. Look sharp, man! yet in God's name, I implore you to be wary!"

He wrung my hand, sheathed his sword, and withdrew. A minute afterwards, he emerged from the ruined bomb-proof arch; Bianca leaned on his arm, and a party of soldiers threw themselves in a dense circle around her for her protection.

"Claude, Claude!" she cried, in a despairing voice; but the faithful band hurried her down to the boats.

"Sound—close to the centre!" cried I to the bugle-boy: "call off the men from every point!"

As he obeyed me, tears fell fast from his eyes: his father, a soldier, lay dead in the breach close by. The bugle-blast was caught, in various cadence, by the wind,

and could be barely heard above the noise of the conflict; the assembly, and the retreat, poured in rapid succession on the ear, and the last shrill note of the warning to retire *double-quick* had scarcely been given, ere the bugle flew from his grasp, and, struck by a shot, the poor boy rolled at my feet, bleeding, and beating the earth. Sixty men, the last remnant of my comrades, assembled from every point. Lloyd spiked the mortar, and the whole rushed, helter-skelter, down the steep staircase, and sprang into the boats, which were pushed off as soon as they were filled.

I was the last to leave the fort, and, as I turned to go, "O, Captain Dundas, don't leave *me*, sir!" cried an imploring voice: it was the little bugler of the 62nd. A score of wounded men were crying the same thing: it was impossible to attend to them all, but, snatching up the boy, I bore him off, and leaped into the launch of the *Electra*, in the stern-sheets of which sat Bianca, rolled up in my regimental cloak, to protect her from the chill morning air and damp sea atmosphere. She sobbed convulsively, with terror and joy. Santugo was in one of the gun-boats—Macnesia sat beside him; Lloyd, Lascelles, and the soldiers, were crowded into other craft, and the whole gave a reckless cheer of defiance.

"Shove off!" cried the captain of the *Electra*, through his speaking-trumpet; "give way, lads—cheerily now!" and the oars dipped in the water as the sails were trimmed, and the sterns were turned to Scylla.

The whole embarkation had been effected with matchless rapidity and order, notwithstanding that the cannon-shot, the bursting shells, the grenades, and musketry, lashed and tore the water into foam around us—the sea, all the while, roaring and rolling in mighty mountains of froth against the cliffs, where it boiled, as if in impotent wrath, recoiling from the slippery and frowning bluff, to run its waves in quick succession into the vast and gloomy Dragara, which has often been compared to the mouth of some wondrous monster essaying to engulf all ocean. One seaman was killed, and ten dangerously wounded; but these casualties were deemed trifling, under so heavy a fire, and when the sea was heaving and breaking beneath us, threatening every instant to swamp the boats, to dash them against each other, or on these inhospitable

rocks, which nearly proved so fatal to the "sacred *Argo*" of old.

With three hearty cheers, we moved off. Scarcely had we done so, when the tricolour waved over Scylla, and the tall red plumes and glancing bayonets of the 101st appeared among the ruined walls, while a party of the 23rd rushed, shouting, down the staircase, with such impetuosity that many fell headlong into the seething sea.

We had done our duty. Though, by force of numbers, they had beaten us out of the last stronghold of Ferdinand IV. and the British in Calabria, they had gained only a pile of shapeless ruin, and at the dear price of many a gallant fellow. We were now on the open ocean —three minutes before, we were manning the frightful breach!

The storm died away, and the bright Ausonian sun arose in his glory: the shores of Sicily, studded with towns and castles, the green woods, the sparkling sandy beach, the bright Neptunian hills, and the red tower of the Lantern, were all radiant with light. The shore we had left, and the blood-stained Scylla, diminished in the distance, as our sailors bent to their flashing oars, and the bellying canvas swelled on the morning wind, which blew from the pine-clad Apennines.

"Courage, Bianca!" I exclaimed, and threw my arm around her; "we are beyond range, even of cannon, now."

"Anima mia," she whispered, as she laid her head on my shoulder, "you are safe, and I am happy!"

And thus ended MY CAMPAIGN IN THE CALABRIAS.

THE END.

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